

Victrola and 78 Journal

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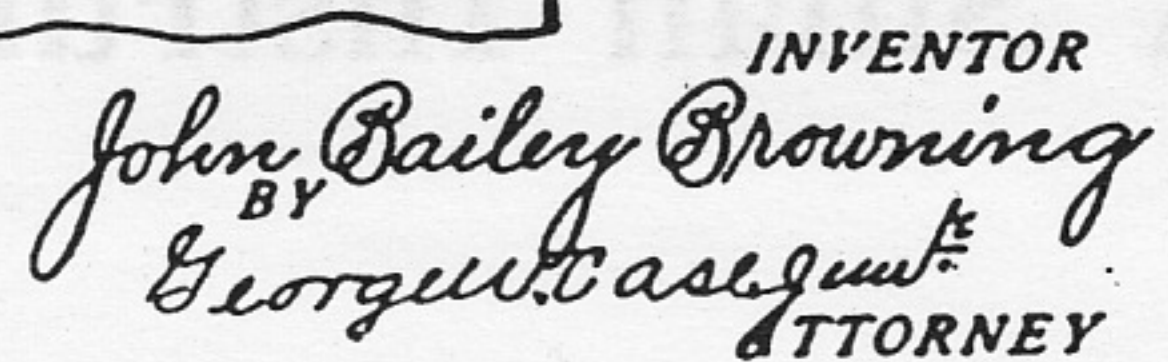


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Victor in the West: The Oakland Pressing Plant -- By William J. Nicolson	2
Sylvester Weaver -- By Jas Obrecht	15
Brunswick's Acoustic Era Phonographs -- By R.J. Wakeman	18
Brunswick vs. Victor: The Legal Battles -- By R.J. Wakeman	22
Continuation of The Brunswick Story: The Company Responds to Radio -- By R. J. Wakeman	26
Ten Most Played 78s... -- By Pete Whelan	32
Ten Favorite 78s -- By Houston Maples	34
Ten Favorite 78s -- By Howard Sanner	36
The Emerson Phonograph Company -- By Allan Sutton	39

Reviews of New Books, CDs, and More

Timothy C. Fabrizio and George F. Paul's <i>THE TALKING MACHINE: AN ILLUSTRATED COMPENDIUM</i>	48
Ronald Dethlefsen's <i>EDISON BLUE AMBEROL RECORDINGS 1912-1914</i> -- Reviewed by Tim Gracyk	56
<i>THE 1903 GRAND OPERA SERIES</i> (Sony MH2K 62334) -- Reviewed by Charles Arnhold	60
Les Docks' <i>AMERICAN PREMIUM RECORD GUIDE 1900-1965, 5TH EDITION</i> -- Reviewed by Nolan Porterfield	63
Peter Martland's <i>SINCE RECORDS BEGAN, EMI: THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS</i> -- Reviewed by Tim Gracyk	70
<i>TWO MINUTE CYLINDERS, VOLUME III</i> -- Reviewed by Tim Gracyk	74
<i>TINY PARHAM 1928-1930</i> (Timeless CBC 1-022) -- Reviewed by Frank M. Young	78
Nolan Porterfield's <i>LAST CAVALIER: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOHN A. LOMAX</i> -- Reviewed by Tim Gracyk	80

VICTROLA AND 78 JOURNAL

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Victor In The West: The Oakland Pressing Plant

By William J. Nicolson

In the 1920s America's three largest record manufacturers--Victor, Columbia, and Brunswick--opened pressing plants on the West Coast, a significant development in the industry.

Victor was first to announce expansion to the West. Page 78 of the April 1923 issue of the trade monthly Talking Machine World states, "It is indeed good news to the talking machine trade on the Pacific Coast that at last the Victor Talking Machine Co. has decided to locate a record pressing plant out this way....Pacific Coast dealers are handicapped...by the long distance from the factories which produce the most popular merchandise, especially in the matter of records of popular song hits and dance music. The life of a new hit is

usually so short that sometimes the peak is reached before the new records reach the Coast."

The same April issue states on page 154 that the company has plans for "an auxiliary record manufacturing plant on the Pacific Coast...It was stated at the [Camden] factory that the proposed new plant would be a complete unit for the production of Victor records, including recording studio, matrix department and special machinery for actual manufacture of records. No details as to the location or extent of the Pacific Coast's plant are available at this time."

Brunswick, which had pressing plants in Long Island City and Jersey City, soon afterwards announced that it would operate a pressing plant in the West. The September 1923 issue of Talking Machine World states on page 30 that plans "are being made by the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co. for the establishment of a permanent record-pressing plant in this city [Los Angeles] to take care of the steadily increasing demand for Brunswick records throughout the Pacific Coast districts."

Brunswick's general sales manager, A.J. Kendrick, explained, "We have found that Los Angeles and the Pacific Coast have originated a large part of the...numbers which are being sought after for recording purposes and feel the time is rapidly approaching when it will be found more economical to make our own records here than to defray the expenses of orchestras and artists in bringing them East for recording purposes."

Brunswick began recording in Los Angeles several months before its plant was ready. Vic Meyers and His Orchestra first recorded on August 21, 1923 (Abe Lyman's band is an example of a California band that had traveled east to record). Brunswick opened its Los Angeles plant months before Victor opened its Oakland plant. The March 1924 issue of Talking Machine World on page 94 gives the L.A. address as 2481 Porter St. while page 171 cites Santa Fe Avenue and 9th St.



Talking Machine World's July 1924 issue reports that Victor 19325 was the first record pressed in the Oakland plant, evidently on May 6. Near Nipper's nose is an "o" indicating Oakland. The above was recorded in Chicago on April 5, 1924 and was released on May 30, according to Advance Record Bulletins in TMW's July issue.

Columbia waited until 1926 to set up its plant in Oakland. The September 15, 1926 issue of Talking Machine World mentions that facility: "The property, which contains approximately 73,000 square feet of ground space on Fifty-seventh avenue, off East Fourteenth street, is in the Oakland industrial district." The company had gone into receivership in 1923 and was in no position in that year to expand to the West Coast as did Victor and Brunswick. But Columbia was a pioneer in that it shipped recording equipment to San Francisco as early as 1921. The February 1921 issue of Talking Machine World reports on page 114, "E.N. Burns, vice-president of the Columbia Graphophone Co., who is devoting practically all of his time to the recording division, left for the Pacific Coast on Sunday with...equipment for the purpose of making an additional series of Art Hickman's Orchestra records." Brian Rust's American Dance Band Discography 1917-1942 shows Hickman recording in San Francisco beginning on February 7, 1921.

Before the 1920s, Victor recording activity was limited to the East Coast. Some Victor sessions were held in Chicago in 1921. The May 1921 issue of Talking Machine World states on page 134, "What is claimed to be the first recording ever made in Chicago by the Victor Co. was done here in April by Ed King, of the Victor laboratory. With a couple of assistants and a collapsible recording apparatus Mr. King recorded a number of selections of Benson's Orchestra...The work was done in a room in the Forster Music Publishing Building on Wabash avenue."

The June 1923 issue of Talking Machine World states on page 64 that the Oakland plant "will be the ninth on the list of Victor manufacturing plants distributed around the country." Where were the other plants? Was this an error for around the world? A world map of the late 1920s duplicated in E.R. Fenimore Johnson's book His Master's Voice Was Eldridge R. Johnson shows where factories were located, and in the United States only Camden and Oakland are represented. Outside the U.S. were Victor and



Recorded in Los Angeles on June 9, 1924. With this disc Victor issued for the first time performances recorded by the company on the Pacific Coast (matrix is PB-2). Victor 19379 was also pressed in Camden, and on those copies the label has no "o," typeface is standard Victor typeface, and "of Hollywood" is added to the band's name.

Gramophone Company plants in Montreal, Yokohama, Sydney, Santiago, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, and a few European cities.

Announcements of the Oakland Plant

The Oakland Chamber of Commerce, which regularly issued news in its one-page publication titled "Bolts and Nuts," on June 22, 1923 formally announced Victor's arrival, stating that Victor "has purchased ten acres...On the 77th Ave. side it extends along the entire western frontage of the [Durant] Aviation Field, thus enabling this property to be approached from 77th, 78th and 79th Avenues. Spur track, which will be joint Western Pacific and Southern Pacific, will be installed on the property. The real estate transaction was handled by the E.B. Field Company."

Victor executive Edward E. Shumaker, with production manager J.C. Weeks, traveled to Oakland in June to close the deal. Within two years Shumaker would conduct the negotiations with Western Electric and Bell Telephone Laboratories that led to Victor's conversion to electric recording and its Orthophonic line. A Victor employee since 1904, he became the company's vice-president in January 1926 and then president on January 6, 1927, soon after Eldridge R. Johnson retired.

If an address with "78" may be viewed as a good omen, Shumaker must have been delighted with the plant's address, 1100 78th Ave, with the entrance on 78th Avenue. That entrance is today blocked, the property approachable only from 79th Avenue.

To indicate what Victor could bring to the

local community as an employer, the Chamber of Commerce writer (one C.W. Foy) stressed the size of the Victor operation on the East Coast, the implication being that Victor's Oakland operation could grow to become one of Oakland's largest manufacturers: "The home plant and executive offices of the Victor Talking Machine Co. are located in Camden, N.J., where, under normal conditions, they employ 8,500 persons, this number at times being increased to 10,000. The company has a splendid sick benefit plan by which sick or disabled employees are paid \$14.00 a week during the time they are incapacitated. The total current assets of this Company as of December 31st, 1921, were \$29,037,457....The officers of the Company are as follows: Eldridge R. Johnson, Pres.; C.K. Haddon, Vice Pres. and Gen. Supt.; E.K. Mac Ewan, Secty.; W.J. Staats, Treas.; E.E. Shumaker, Gen. Purchasing Agt.; R.L. Freeman, Director of Distribution."

Construction began in October 1923 on the record pressing plant, the first of a proposed two units. The October 7, 1923 issue of the Oakland Tribune reports in an article titled "Victor Co. Start on New Plant," "Construction has commenced on the first unit of the plant of the Victor Talking Machine company in Oakland, it is announced by E.B. Field and company, who handled the deal whereby the company acquired twenty acres of land, valued at \$85,000..." The figure of 20 acres is twice what the Chamber of Commerce had reported.

The article states, "The first unit is to be devoted to the manufacture of records. The unit will cost \$150,000 without equipment, and will cover one acre of the site...The first unit will employ 350 persons. The second floor of the unit on which construction has started will be occupied by the Recording department, or studio. Here singers, musicians and orchestras will assemble to produce those records that are entirely 'Oakland made.' Records by eastern talent will also be made at the Oakland plant...from metal plates sent here from the east. The records are to be cut from a record-mixture fabricated at the Camden, New Jer-



Recorded in L.A. on June 10, 1924 (the reverse side, Rose's "String Beans," was cut one day earlier). The song's three writers were prominent Los Angeles band leaders. Sheet music of "Mandalay" sold well, helped by Charlie Chaplin's endorsement on the cover: "To Abe Lyman--my favorite is Mandalay." Brunswick had equipment in California before Victor, and Lyman cut "Mandalay" for Brunswick on May 28, 1924.



Recording began in Oakland with Art Landry and his Orchestra on June 18, 1924. On the next day Max Dolin recorded (the above is matrix PB-36). Most artists who recorded in Oakland were West Coast artists who had never recorded before. An exception was Dolin, who visited Victor's New York studio several times in the early 1920s. He had also made Vocalion and Pathé records.

sey, plant of the company, and shipped here in bulk." An item on page 177 of the November 1923 issue of Talking Machine World gives different figures, claiming the plant, made "entirely of brick construction," would cost \$130,000 to erect and would employ "about 200 people." It names Oakland's William Knowles as the building's architect.

The Oakland Tribune article discusses equipment and supplies: "The first unit is to include a steam plant, and accommodation for 24 record stamping presses. 150,000 gallons of water are to be used daily to cool the records. The even and cool temperatures of the Oakland water was an important factor in securing the location of the factory in this city. Los Angeles also attempted to secure the plant, but the extreme warmth of the

water there in summer is said to have constituted a negative factor." Columbia officials must have also considered water temperatures when choosing Oakland for its pressing plant (its rail system and central location in the state—much closer to Oregon and Washington than L.A.—must have also been deciding factors). It is unknown how engineers in Brunswick's new Los Angeles plant addressed the problem of water in that area not remaining cold year-round, if indeed it was a problem.

The article suggests that Victor had plans for a large industrial complex: "Two other units are to follow for the construction of cabinets, and manufacture of motors." These proposed units for phonograph manufacturing never materialized. Disappointing sales in 1924—not just for Victor but for the talking machine industry—probably made further expansion in Oakland unfeasible. Possibly the expense in 1925 of converting the Camden site to produce Orthophonic products halted forever plans to expand the Oakland site.

Victor invested heavily in infrastructure in 1923 and 1924, obviously anticipating increased sales. Executives must have regretted such heavy investments after the Christmas season of 1924 proved dismal! The Oakland plant was planned and constructed at the same time the Camden site expanded dramatically. Buildings 8 (for metal manufacturing) and 10 (for record pressing) were added at this time, and Building 13 (next to 10) was transformed from a four-story unit to a seven-story plant. The February 1923 issue of Talking Machine World states on page 64 that Victor "is making additions and enlargements to its present plant costing approximately \$1,000,000. The work will consist of two structures, one an eight-story record manufacturing plant 436 feet long." The same issue states on page 122 that Victor "has announced the starting of work on additions to the Victor plant in Camden that, when completed, will make possible the doubling of the record output of the company. The details of the construction plan were authorized recently by B.G. Royal, vice-president of the Victor Co." (Royal succeeded Haddon, mentioned earlier, as vice-president.)

The Oakland Plant Opens

Construction evidently went smoothly since the Oakland plant was operational by May 1924. The October 1924 issue of Talking Machine World states on page 206b that the plant has been "in operation since last May," with "the first record being pressed on the afternoon of May 6." The June issue of the trade journal had said nothing about the plant but the July 1924 issue includes an article on page 43 titled "New Victor Record Pressing Plant In Oakland, Cal., Now Producing Records." Two subtitles for the article indicate why the plant was built: "Plant Constructed to Facilitate Handling of Record Demand of Western Trade" and "Laboratories Makes [sic] Easier Recording of Artists of Far West."

A third subtitle states "'Oriental Love Dreams'



Recorded on February 6, 1925, this sold very well in the West. In the Orthophonic era various Victor artists recorded this song--Waring's Pennsylvanians, the Victor Salon Orchestra, vocalist Leonard Hinds, John McCormack. Few labels are this cluttered. Some labels for Victor 19579 eliminate the Spanish title and reference to English organist-composer Edwin Lemare.

First Record Made." This must be the Coon-Sanders Original Night Hawk Orchestra version, recorded in Chicago one month earlier, on April 6, 1924 and issued as Victor 19325 on May 30, according to the June 1924 issue of Talking Machine World. It was pressed at both plants, Camden and Oakland. Some copies are stamped as Oakland pressings (it seems the Oakland identification mark, an "o" above Nipper on the label, was used from the beginning), others are not.

Why this was chosen for Oakland's first pressing is unknown but "Oriental Love Dreams" was co-written by West Coast band leader Earl Burtnett, who at the time led Art Hickman's Orchestra. If this dance ensemble often played the song to audiences, that would help account for any popularity the song enjoyed in the West (Oakland pressings of Victor 19325 are relatively common in California). Within the year many masters or stampers of musical numbers that had been recorded on the East Coast were sent to Oakland so copies could be pressed and then distributed in the West. Among discs having an Oakland identification mark, the lowest catalog number I know about is Victor 17001, which features performances of 1911. Like the plant's other pressings of 1924 and early 1925, the Oakland pressing of 17001 has a late "wing" label, with "For best results use Victrola Tungs-tone Needles" to the spindle hole's left (this was added to Victor's "wing" label in early 1924).

John S. Macdonald, who made many records years earlier as tenor Harry Macdonough, became in 1923 manager of Victor's artists and repertoire department, taking over administrative duties from Calvin G. Child. Macdonald traveled to the West Coast months after the Oakland plant became operational. The January 1925 issue of Talking Machine World reports on page 156, "J.S. Macdonald, head of the recording department of the Victor Talking Machine Co., left Camden on January 8 for a visit to the Pacific Coast where he will inspect the new recording and pressing plant in Oakland...E. [Eddie] J. King, of the New York Recording Laboratories of the Victor, will also make a trip through the West shortly."

George Hall, Raymond Sooy, Leroy Shield

Little is known of George Hall, the plant's superintendent. The March 15, 1924 issue of Talking Machine World states that Hall "has been connected with the recording department of the Victor Co. in Camden for many years." His photograph is included with an article titled "Victor Executive Manufacturing Personnel" in the September 1927 issue of Talking Machine World, which gives a different version of his background: "Mr. Hall, who came to the Victor Co. in 1907 as a clerk in the accounting department, is manager of the Oakland, Cal., record pressing plant. Prior to taking over this...he was in charge of the employment office, later going back to the accounting department to take charge of the payroll. When the Oakland plant was opened he became business manager of this branch."

Phone directories of the 1930s show that George Hall resided in Piedmont, a city next to Oakland. This is not the George Hall who made Victor records with the Hotel Taft Orchestra beginning in 1933. However, Rust notes in The Victor Master Book that for a session in Oakland on February 2, 1928, one George Hall, Jr. supplied vocals for Victor 21506, featuring Eddie Harkness and His Orchestra. Was this Hall the son of the plant's superintendent?

The same September 1927 article indicates that Raymond R. Sooy was nominally in charge of the Oakland labs: "While his headquarters are in Camden, the recording rooms in New York, Chicago and Oakland, as well as those at the Camden plant, are under his supervision, as are also the recording expeditions in the field." Raymond Sooy had succeeded his brother Harry Sooy, who had traveled to Oakland to supervise recording activities and died in Oakland in 1927 (he had pneumonia earlier in the year). Page 59 of the June 1927 issue of Talking Machine World reports that Harry Sooy's body was sent from Oakland to Camden for burial. Another brother, Charles Sooy, also worked in Victor's recording laboratories in Camden. Page 106 of the July 1924 issue of Talk-



Recorded on August 26, 1925, this was among the first performances cut electrically in Oakland. If the Oakland plant had not been operating, Bulotti--a San Francisco tenor--might never have made a Victor record. The song here naturally appealed to West Coast buyers.

ing Machine World identifies Fred Elsasser as "manager of the recording laboratory, Oakland."

Victor's musical director in Oakland beginning in 1926, and its Artists and Repertoire man of the Western half of the U.S., was Leroy Shield (1893-1962), perhaps best known today for composing around 1930 music used in Hal Roach film comedies (Marvin Hatley was music director for the films). Rust's Victor Master Book shows that in 1925, before moving to California, Shield provided piano accompaniment on recordings made in Victor's New York studio, and it also identifies Shield as accompanist on many Oakland recordings made from May 1926 onwards. A 1930 chart of executives duplicated in Fred Barnum's "His Master's Voice" In America gives Leroy Shield's title as Musical Director in Charge of Hollywood, Calif., Activities. His name is not on many labels though Victor 22548 features Leroy

Shield and the Victor Hollywood Orchestra performing "Sing-Song Girl" and "Song of the Big Trail." Afterwards he worked regularly in radio. He was music director for NBC Chicago from 1931 to 1945, then worked for NBC in New York.

Recorded in Los Angeles, Pressed in Oakland

As indicated earlier, the first records pressed in Oakland, beginning with the Coon-Sanders disc, had not been recorded there. In fact, performances recorded in Los Angeles were pressed before any Oakland recordings were pressed. The earliest performances both recorded and then processed on the West Coast appear to be by Vincent Rose and his Montmartre Orchestra as well as by Art Hickman's Orchestra, with one selection by each on Victor 19379. Hickman's group performs "Mandalay" on side A. "String Beans" on side B was cut by Rose's group four days earlier.

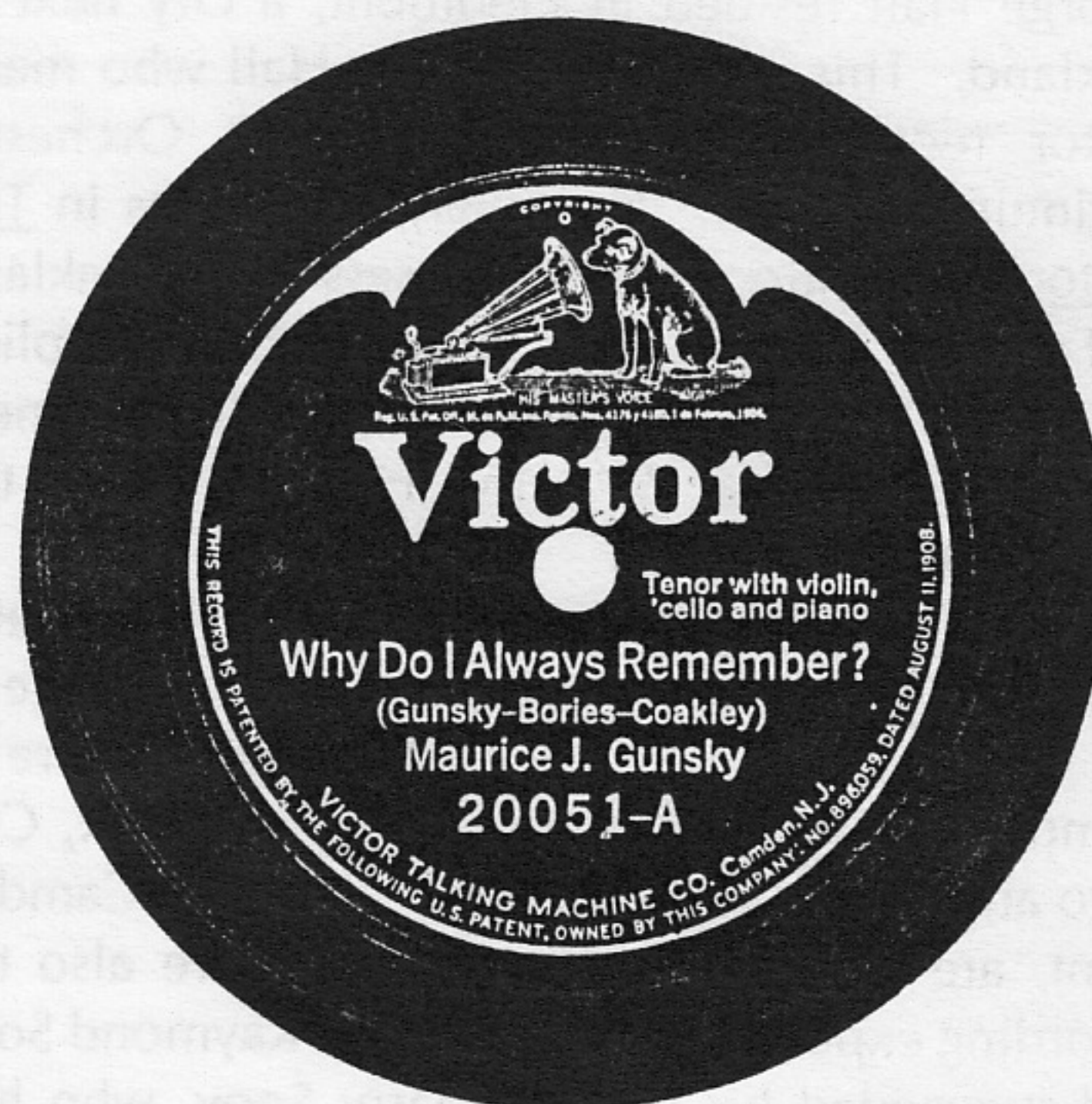
Rust's American Dance Band Discography names Oakland as the recording location for Victor 19379, perhaps citing that city because logs do not establish a location. However, Hickman's contract dated June 5, 1924 states that "ten (10) or more complete musical selections, selected by the Company" would be cut within 14 months "at mutually convenient times in the City of Los Angeles."

Also, page 106 of the July 1924 issue of Talking Machine World discusses recording apparatus being set up in Los Angeles in June 1924, with Eddie King selecting artists and songs, Raymond Sooy running equipment: "A number of Victor recordings of local organizations and individuals were secured last month when a special recording apparatus was installed here. E.T. King, manager [of the] New York artist and repertoire department, succeeded in arranging with Art Hickman's Biltmore Hotel Orchestra, which is under the leadership of Earl Burtnett, Vincent Rose's Montmartre Cafe, Hollywood, Orchestra, and with a number of locally famous Hawaiian and Mexican instrumentalists and orchestras, so that many very successful recordings were made which will appear in the Victor catalog in the near

future and will be pressed in the new Pacific Coast factory in Oakland."

The article's wording is clumsy but clearly the first recordings were done in Los Angeles. Logs show that nearly three dozen numbers were cut from June 9 to June 16, 1924. Bruce Vermazen has found documents that identify the Alexandria Hotel as the recording site. The Hawaiian artist alluded to is Keaumoku and His String Trio. For Victor's Mexican market the Rodriguez Orchestra cut numbers issued in the 77000-78000 series.

Overlooked in the article is Glen Oswald's Serenaders, which recorded three titles on June 16 in Los Angeles. These June takes were rejected but the group recorded again in September (in Oakland), and the release of Victor 19410 soon followed, with three more records issued in 1925. The orchestra had been formed in Portland, Ore-



Gunsky discs sold well, beginning with this, cut on May 1, 1926 in Oakland. Issued on August 1, it was among the last discs issued with a "wing" label (the slogan "For best results use Victrola Tungs-tone Needles" was dropped from labels around this time). The scroll was introduced two months later, and it is easier to find copies of Victor 20051 on "scroll" label than on "wing."

gon and played for years in Portland's Winter Garden. Page 210 of the November 1924 issue of Talking Machine World states that months earlier in 1924 it was "called South to fill an engagement at the Cinderella Roof Garden at Los Angeles and the next thing Portland knew another one of its favorite orchestras was announced Victor artists. Their recording was done at the Oakland Victor branch and 'Oh, Peter,' and 'You Go Your Way and I'll Go Mine' is their initial recording released in October [19410]."

Since the company's first West Coast record, Victor 19379, features Vincent Rose and his Montmartre Orchestra as well as Art Hickman's Orchestra, more should be said about them. Rose was successful as not only a band leader but song writer. In 1920 he helped compose "Whispering" and "Avalon." His orchestra, popular in Hollywood, cut four titles on June 9, 1924, including "Moonlight Memories," issued on Victor 19416 backed by "Tell Me You'll Forgive Me" performed by the International Novelty Orchestra. It is a rare instance of Victor coupling West Coast and East Coast recordings (another is Victor 19809, which features on one side a Glen Oswald's Serenaders number--cut in L.A. on September 4, 1925--with the International Novelty Orchestra on the reverse).

On June 10, a day after Rose recorded, Art Hickman's Orchestra recorded three titles, returning three days later to record additional ones, including "Mandalay." It was engaged at the time by Los Angeles' Biltmore Hotel.

Victor's October 1924 supplement includes Victor 19379 and calls it the company's first record by "two famous California organizations." Talking Machine World cites September 5 as the release date. Processing Victor recordings in this period--from session date to release date--took from two to four months. The Rose and Hickman numbers, cut in mid-June and issued in early September, were typical Victor products in this regard.

Victor began a special series of matrix numbers for the West Coast, including performances cut in Oakland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. Matrix numbers for ten-inch discs

were prefixed by PB, those for twelve-inch by PC. "P" meant "Pacific Coast," "B" meant 10-inch, and "C" meant 12-inch. Victor 19379 was the first record issued under the special system, "String Beans" having matrix PB-2 (PB-1 was a Rose performance issued later on Victor 19512). Materials provided by William R. Moran indicate that the "P" series ran from PB-1 (June 9, 1924) to PBVE-336 (June 2, 1927). Rust states in The Victor Master Book that "the series was discontinued after a session in Butte, Montana, on June 3, 1927," after which "a block of normal matrix serials was allocated to such recordings as required."

Recordings Made in Oakland--Popular Series

While the honor of being first to record for Victor on the West Coast went to Vincent Rose's musicians in Los Angeles, Art Landry's were first to record in Oakland. Page 143 of the August 1924 issue of Talking Machine World states, "The first record made at the new Victor plant here was recorded by Art Landry and His Orchestra, equipped with Buescher instruments." Rust's American Dance Band Discography shows Landry recording on June 18, 1924 (Landry later recorded in Camden). Landry had his session in Oakland nine days after Vincent Rose first cut titles in L.A., and Landry's "Rip Saw Blues" on Victor 19398 was, along with Victor 19379 featuring Rose, issued in October 1924. Landry's orchestra was featured at San Francisco's Warfield Theatre.

Other orchestras that recorded in Oakland in 1924 and 1925, presumably in the plant, include those led by Henry Halstead (his orchestra played in San Francisco's St. Francis Hotel), Max Dolin (this violinist, whose orchestra was engaged at this time in San Francisco's California Theatre for the show The Siren of Seville, had recorded in the East years earlier, including for Pathé), Ben Black (this banjoist was a successful songwriter as well as a band leader), and Rudy Seiger and His Fairmont Hotel Orchestra (its one record, Victor 19629, sold poorly--Rudy Seiger's Shell Symphonists made two records in 1928).



Jean Goldkette and His Orchestra never recorded in Oakland but all copies of "Just One More Kiss" have an "o" on the label--or so some collectors say. It may be an example of a title recorded in the East and pressed only in the West (likewise, some Oakland recordings were pressed only in the East). Anyone own a copy without an "o"?

Of band leaders who began careers in the Bay Area and recorded there in the 1920s, Horace Heidt would become most successful. Born on May 21, 1901 in Alameda, which is adjacent to Oakland, the pianist played professionally in Oakland before making his recording debut with "Mine" and "Hello Cutie!" (Victor 20608) on April 22, 1927. He remained active in the music business into the 1950s but was most popular in the late 1930s and early 1940s. He died in 1986.

Rust's Victor Master Book often cites "Oakland" as a recording location. Specific sites are not noted but we may assume some sessions were in the plant, others elsewhere in the city. Pianist Edna Fischer had three sessions in Oakland in the spring of 1928 ("Rag Doll" and "The Varsity Drag" are on Victor 21384). Before her recent death on November 2, 1997, she was friendly with collectors of 78s and recalled that all her sessions were at the Shriners Temple Auditorium near Lake

Merritt in downtown Oakland, miles from the industrial section of the city where the plant is.

Among the most successful numbers recorded in Oakland was Victor 19579, issued in May 1925. "On The Way To Monterey" appealed to record buyers but the B side, "Moonlight and Roses," was even more popular. The song on each side of Victor 19579 was written by Ben Black and Neil Moret. It is surprising that Henry Halstead and His Orchestra recorded the songs since Black himself was a band leader who cut Victor records in Oakland. Black and Moret were important to San Francisco's music establishment. Moret, whose real name was Charles N. Daniels (1878-1943), enjoyed success in the business long before he moved to San Francisco in 1912--he was credited in 1899 as "arranger" on Scott Joplin's first published rag, "Original Rags." Black, once a banjoist in Art Hickman's Orchestra, had collaborated with Hickman on the popular "Dry Your Tears" in 1918 and on other numbers. Daniels, Black and Paul Corbell ran their music publishing firm, Villa Morét, Inc., from the Kress Building in downtown San Francisco.

Another popular disc to originate from Oakland was Victor 20051 featuring Maurice J. Gunsky crooning "Lay My Head Beneath a Rose" and "Why Do I Always Remember?" This was from his first session as a solo artist, held on May 1, 1926 (a day earlier he provided a vocal refrain for Ben Black's Victor 20049). The tenor had a few sessions in the Bay Area, then from 1926 to 1928 made Victor recordings in New York, and finally returned to Oakland in 1928 to make his last Victor records. He briefly recorded for Columbia. A lyricist, Gunsky recorded several of his own works (he often wrote with Merton H. Bories, sometimes with Nat Goldstein), and other artists recorded his numbers. For example, "Honolulu Blues," by Gunsky and Goldstein, is performed by the New Orleans Black Birds on Victor V-38026.

Not much "hot" jazz, authentic blues, or opera was recorded in Oakland. The only band leaders whose jazz was "hot" enough for Rust to include them in Jazz Records: 1897-1942 were

Henry Halstead and Horace Heidt. No African-Americans are known to have recorded in Oakland or San Francisco. No Oakland recordings were issued in Victor's V-38000 series (this is in contrast to many performances in the V-38000 series recorded elsewhere and pressed in Oakland). The only artist to record in the Bay Area and then be issued on a Victor hillbilly series, both the V-23000 and V-40000, was Harry McClintock, often called "Radio Mac," sometimes just "Mac."

At least three artists made "personal" records in Oakland. Tenor Harry Robertson recorded two titles in 1925, soprano Mabel Riegelman recorded three titles in 1926, and Leana Schwayder recorded a title in 1926. The label of a Riegelman record in William R. Moran's collection states "Victor Special Record (For Private Use Only)." Though it was undoubtedly pressed in Oakland, the label refers only to "Camden, N.J."



The Multnomah Hotel was in Portland, Oregon. Herman Kenin's orchestra made its first records, including the above, on May 29, 1927 in the hotel's Tea Garden. It traveled to Oakland in March 1928 to cut "Rose Room" and other numbers. In 1929 it traveled to San Francisco and then southern California to record final numbers.

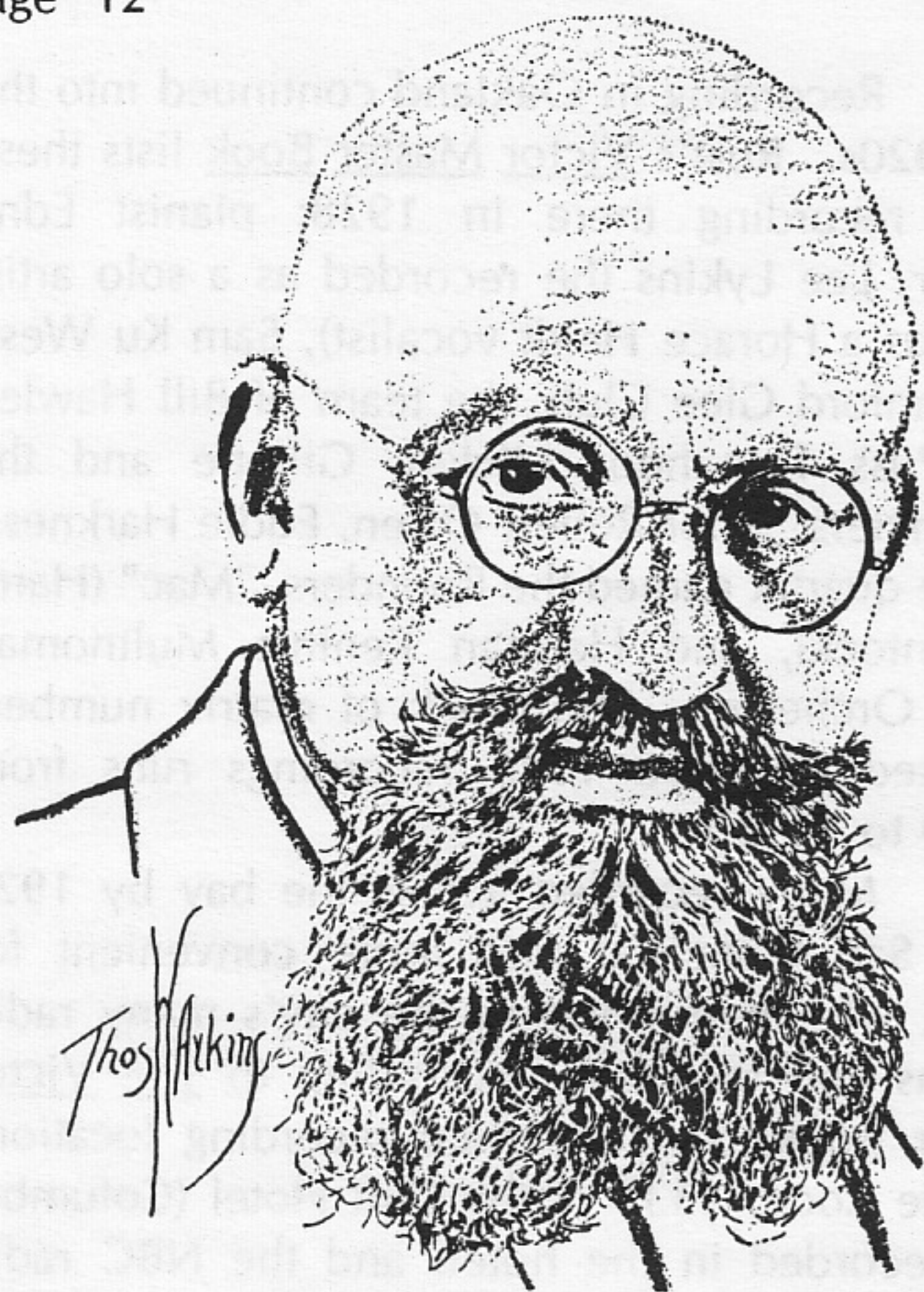
Recording in Oakland continued into the late 1920s. Rust's Victor Master Book lists these artists recording there in 1928: pianist Edna Fischer, Lee Lykins (he recorded as a solo artist and was a Horace Heidt vocalist), Sam Ku West, the Stanford Glee Club, the team of Bill Hawley and Puss Donahoo, Mickey Gillette and the Romanciers, tenor Robert Olsen, Eddie Harkness, a male quartet named the Rounders, "Mac" (Harry McClintock), and Herman Kenin's Multnomah Hotel Orchestra. The block of matrix numbers allocated to these 1928 recordings runs from 42000 to 42139.

Many recorded across the bay by 1927 since San Francisco was more convenient for artists, who performed in the city's many radio stations and theatres. According to The Victor Master Book, San Francisco recording locations include Room 4333 of the Clift Hotel (Columbia also recorded in the hotel) and the NBC radio studio. Materials provided by William R. Moran indicate that some sessions were in the city's Columbia Theater--despite the name Columbia!

Electrical Recording in Oakland

Electrical recording began in Oakland on August 24, 1925, which was a half year after experiments with electrical recording had been conducted in Camden, such as on February 26 when the Eight Famous Victor Artists performed before a microphone (released as Victor 35753 on May 29). Electrical recording began in earnest in Camden in March, Victor 19630 being one of the first of the new type of discs to be issued (on May 1). In Oakland, Henry Halstead recorded electrically two titles during the August 24 session but nothing was issued. Oakland's first electric recordings to be issued are on Victor 19766, Ben Black and His Orchestra performing "I Love You, California" on one side, tenor Charles Bulotti singing the same on the other side. Black's session was on August 25, 1925, Bulotti's session a day later.

In the early 1930s RCA Victor on the East Coast gradually shifted from the original Western



ALFRED HERTZ

In January 1925 Alfred Hertz was the first conductor to make Red Seal records on the West Coast. He began leading the San Francisco Symphony in 1915 after spending 13 years with the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, where he conducted the American premieres of Salome and Der Rosenkavalier. He was first to conduct Wagner's Parsifal outside Bayreuth, and it is fitting that the first issued discs of the SFSO--led by Hertz--were of Parsifal excerpts.

Electric electrical recording system, which relied on condenser microphones, to an improved one using the RCA 44 ribbon (or "velocity") microphone, a different amplification system, and a new cutting head. A diamond surrounding the familiar "VE" in the shellac near the label indicates that the newer cutting head was used to cut grooves during a session (an oval indicates the older system). An early disc made with the new system is Victor 22672, cut in New York on April 8, 1931. It features Rudy Vallee and His Connecticut Yankees.

The superior cutting head was not installed in Oakland or San Francisco, not soon anyway. Tom Coakley and his Palace Hotel Orchestra recorded in San Francisco as late as March 1934, and these discs have the "VE" in the old-style oval.

By the early 1930s recording activity was heavier in the Los Angeles area, especially Hollywood-Culver City, than in the San Francisco-Oakland area. The new cutting head was not installed right away in the southern part of the state. Performances cut there as late as July 1937 by various artists--for example, Benny Goodman and his Orchestra on Victor 25627--have the oval.

Blue Label and Red Seal Records

The Oakland plant did not press many discs in the ten-inch 45000 or twelve-inch 55000 blue label series. Each series ended within two years of the plant's opening. Nothing in that series was recorded on the West Coast. Blue label Victors pressed in Oakland (and in Camden) during the late acoustic era include 45491, featuring the De Reszke Singers (labels say "Recorded in Europe"), and 45456, featuring Olive Kline on one side, Lambert Murphy on the other. Blue label records of the early Orthophonic era pressed in Oakland include Victor 45489, featuring Olive Kline and Elsie Baker; 45519, featuring Lucy Isabelle Marsh and the Trinity Choir; and 45531, featuring the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra under Rudolph Ganz's direction (issued in April 1926, this ten-inch record was among the last in the ten-inch series--the 55000 series had ended a few months earlier).

Some Oakland records were accorded Red Seal status. On May 1, 1925 people could buy for the first time San Francisco Symphony Orchestra records, namely three 12-inch discs (6498-6500) featuring the Prelude and Good Friday Spell from Wagner's Parsifal. Conductor Alfred Hertz graced the cover of Victor's May supplement. The SFSO had recorded Auber's Fra Diavolo overture on January 19, 1925--a week before recording the Wagner selections--but the Auber piece was not issued until July 31 (6506). Hertz and the SFSO

would make many more records.

Victor's youngest Red Seal artist, Yehudi Menuhin, recorded in Oakland. Born in 1916, he made his concert debut in 1924 and his recording debut in Oakland in 1928. Ten-inch Victor 1329 was issued in July 1928, followed by twelve-inch Victor 6841 in October. Menuhin states in his 1976 autobiography Unfinished Journey that an Oakland church was hired for recording purposes but his recollection was imperfect (he says these were RCA Victor discs, for example) and he may have the Shriners Temple Auditorium in mind.

Label Variations

Discs featuring early performances recorded in California have a distinctive label typeface—different from that on records pressed in Camden as well as on records pressed in Oakland that were made from East Coast masters or stampers. "Oriental Love Dreams," the first record pressed in Oakland, has a regular typeface, but "String Beans," recorded on the West Coast as well as pressed there, has the unusual typeface.

After a month or two of releases, typeface on most Oakland records matched typeface on Camden records. It is interesting to compare Oak-

land pressings with Camden pressings of the same item. Labels of some Oakland pressings include information missing on the same record pressed in Camden, and vice versa. For example, Victor 21335, featuring Horace Heidt and His Orchestra and issued in 1928, was pressed in both locations. The Camden label uses all capital letters for song titles on sides A and B, includes a Spanish translation of song titles in parenthesis, and gives full names of composers. The Oakland label is less cluttered since no Spanish is included (despite California bordering Mexico) and composers are given simply as "Hauerbach-Hoschna" on side A and "C.J. Bond" on side B. Side B of the Camden pressing states, "Vocal refrain by Lee Lykins" whereas Oakland's side B states, "Vocal refrain by Members of Orchestra."

What was built as a Victor plant in the mid-1920s was an RCA Victor plant for much of the 1930s. It was last listed in the city directory in 1937 and presumably records were pressed there until around 1937. I know of discs pressed there as late as mid-1935, such as Victor 25006, which has an "o" on the B side—the A side has no "o." Victor 25042 has an "o" on the A side—the B side has no "o." Other late Oakland pressings have the "o" on one side only. It appears that RCA Victor stopped adding an "o" to labels around 1935-36 (Brunswick and Columbia discs pressed in the West were never clearly marked as having been manufactured in California). I do not know if Bluebird records, first issued in 1932, were pressed in Oakland. I have seen no Bluebird discs with an "o." I doubt that any "picture records" of 1933 were pressed there.

The Two Victor Sites Today

I have visited both Victor sites, in Camden and in my hometown of Oakland. Each is in a sorry state. In fact, in Camden this year two huge buildings were demolished, which delighted city developers who viewed the abandoned and vandalized buildings as not only eyesores but impediments to development along Camden's waterfront





Pressed in Oakland in mid-1935. Discs from this era with the "o" above Nipper are rare. At this time the company put an "o" on one side only.

area. The June 16, 1997 issue of The Philadelphia Inquirer describes the previous day's demolition of the buildings on the waterfront between the Ben Franklin Bridge and the New Jersey State Aquarium. These were Buildings 10 and 13, one being eight stories tall, the other seven. Construction began on Building 10 in early 1923, at which time three stories were also added to the existing four stories of Building 13. The February 1924 issue of Voice of the Victor shows how the buildings looked upon completion.

Engineered Demolition Inc. workers spent days inserting commercial dynamite into concrete columns. Around the steel columns they wrapped charges since they were unable to get inside them. At 8:00 a.m. the charges--68 sticks--exploded, sections of buildings caved in, and within ten seconds rubble lay where two buildings had stood, a solitary smokestack standing tall. Four structures, including one with the Nipper Tower (Building 17), remain of the more than 20 buildings that once was the RCA Victor complex.

Demolition may one day be the fate of the Oakland plant, a two-story concrete building with brick facade. The doorway was of a neo-Classical design, with two columns supporting a pediment that once featured a relief of Nipper, which is clear in a photograph in the October 1924 issue of Talking Machine World. Otherwise the plant had no distinctive architectural features. It had nothing like the tower built in 1916 in Camden containing four Nipper windows (the windows in the Camden tower today date from 1979, being replacements for the four originals sent to institutions for care-taking--the Smithsonian, the Camden Historical Society, Widener University in Chester, Pennsylvania, and Penn State University). If at some point RCA Victor items were removed from the Oakland building for preservation, such as the bas relief of Nipper over the main entrance, nothing is known of what happened to them.

Other businesses used the building after RCA Victor left it in the late 1930s. Last used by the Safeway supermarket chain as a soap manufacturing plant, the building today is gutted. Some windows are missing, others broken. Homeless people have camped there. The property is for sale but has little appeal for investors, partly because the neighborhood no longer attracts heavy investment but also because the building itself would require expensive repairs and upgrading. It probably does not meet current earthquake codes.

On the grounds is the foundation for a large water tower. A photograph in the October 1924 issue of Talking Machine World shows that the word "Victor" had been prominently painted on the tower. But today nothing at the site indicates that here was a plant that had manufactured millions of Victor and RCA Victor discs, products that brightened the lives of West Coast record buyers in the 1920s and through the worst years of the Great Depression.

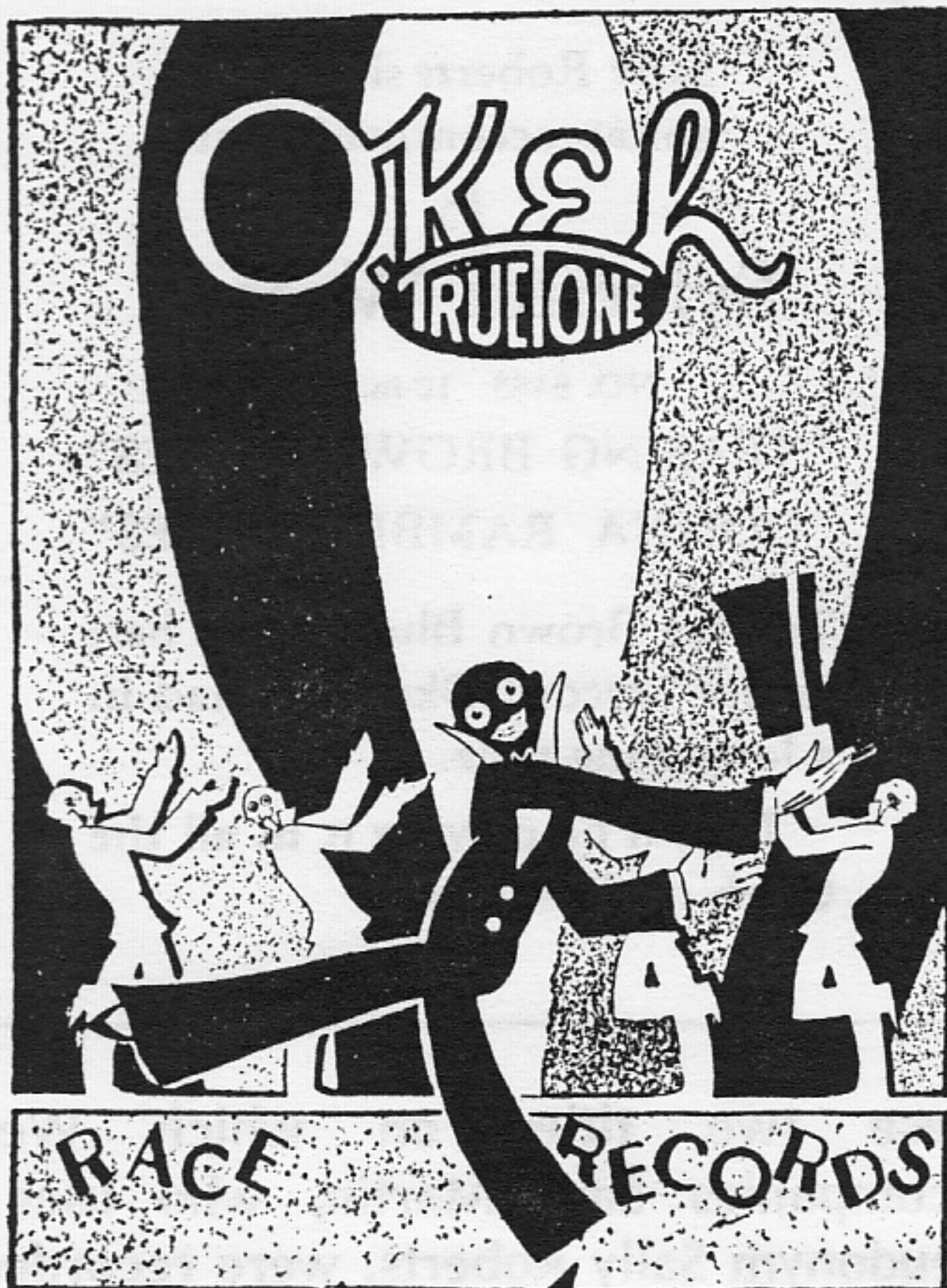
William J. Nicolson lives in Oakland, California. He welcomes additional information about the Oakland plant. Send comments via V78J.

Sylvester Weaver

By Jas Obrecht

Okeh Records proclaimed him "The Man with the Talking Guitar." In 1923 Sylvester Weaver became the first guitarist to play blues on record, and one of his instrumentals—"Guitar Rag"—was destined to become a Western swing classic.

The first years of blues recording were devoted exclusively to women singers—not the downhome country girls who would record later in the Roaring Twenties, but the glittering and glamorous veterans of tent shows, minstrel troupes and vaudeville. In 1920 Mamie Smith's breakthrough recording of "Crazy Blues" had sparked a rush to record blues divas, and for a brief period New York City became the blues recording capital of the world, with singers such as Lucille Hegamin, Ethel Waters, Mary Stafford, Edith Wilson and Alberta Hunter cutting 78s with piano players or ensembles.



Hard-touring Sara Martin had already made records with Fats Waller, W.C. Handy's Orchestra and Clarence Williams' Blue Five featuring Sidney Bechet when, on October 24, 1923, she brought Sylvester Weaver to Okeh's New York facility to record "Longing for Daddy Blues" and "I've Got to Go and Leave My Daddy Behind." On November 2 the pair returned to the studio to record "Roamin' Blues" and "Good-Bye Blues." Playing fingerstyle, Weaver mixed plucked chords with single-string solos on the low strings. While hundreds of blues 78s had already been issued, these were the first to feature a vocal with guitar accompaniment.

During the "Roamin' Blues" session, Weaver also became the first to cut a blues guitar instrumental, tuning his guitar to open D for "Guitar Blues" and "Guitar Rag." Weaver played his simple slide tunes lapstyle, contrasting the high-string single-note solos of "Guitar Blues" with sliding chords, including a surprise b6. His confident performance had an extemporized feel, with no string noise, scraping or clatter. Weaver's winsome, expertly fingerpicked "Guitar Rag" introduced one of the early blues' most famous melodies. In 1927 Weaver recorded a more sophisticated version of "Guitar Rag" with stronger bass lines and a new section. This version influenced many white musicians and spawned Western swing's biggest hit, Bob Wills' 1936 "Steel Guitar Rag" featuring Leon McAuliffe. The song's been a country staple ever since.

Martin's 78s with Weaver were more downhome than her other records, but the combination worked. Okeh ads announced, "Sara Martin discovered the clever idea of making recordings with a guitar accompaniment, and the first records of this kind put out have made remarkable impressions in all parts of the country. Sylvester Weaver plays his guitar in a highly original manner, which consists chiefly of sliding

a knife up and down the strings while he picks with the other hand. His guitar solos, No. 8109, are having wide sales." Soon afterward, record executive Ralph S. Peer wrote to Sara: "'Roamin' Blues' with guitar accompaniment is the biggest seller you have had since [1922's] 'Sugar Blues.' It might be well for you to rearrange your act so that this is your feature number using guitar accompaniment. It seems to me that this would make a wonderful encore number to be used very near the end of your act."

Both performers hailed from Louisville, Kentucky, where Weaver lived among the gritty ghetto tenements and struggling businesses of the Smoketown section. He had served briefly in the Army during World War I, and then returned home to work as a day laborer and to make nightly rounds of Smoketown's saloons, performing as a solo guitarist and with a jug band. After their recording session, Sara, who was 13 years his senior, went on a vaudeville tour with her banjo-strumming husband while Weaver returned to Smoketown and took a job as a packer for a clothing manufacturer.

In March 1924 the pair reunited for a field session in Atlanta with Ralph Peer. Sylvester backed Martin on banjo for one 78 and on guitar for two others. Had he sung during that session, Weaver would have become the first male blues singer to record, but that title went to rough-hewn Ed Andrews, a countrified singer who accompanied himself with utilitarian pick-and-strum guitar a few days later and then never recorded again. Back in New York City later that spring, Weaver waxed four non-slide instrumentals showcasing his ragtimey fingerpicking, big bass runs and treble string bends. A 1925 session in St. Louis teamed him with banjoman Charles Washington and fiddler E.L. Coleman; their bittersweet "Steel String Blues" was a standout, with low-string slide countered by a mournful violin.

For a while Weaver worked as a talent scout for Okeh, and among his discoveries was Helen Humes. While he never became as famous



★ **TEASING BROWN BLUES** ★

Sally Roberts sings to a
guitar accompaniment

by

Sylvester Weaver

NO. 8485 10 in.—75c.

"TEASING BROWN BLUES"

"GONNA RAMBLE BLUES"

Teasing Brown Blues is the best
"scare" record Okeh has had in
a long, long time.

They'll be playing it in all the
Okeh dealers' stores.

These two titles on which Weaver accompanies Sara Martin, who uses the pseudonym Sally Roberts, were recorded on April 7, 1927 and issued in September.

a guitarist as Blind Lemon Jefferson, Blind Blake, Big Bill Broonzy and other contemporaries, he did influence the era's finest blues guitarist. Paul Oliver writes that when Lonnie Johnson saw Sara Martin in 1925, "Johnson was very impressed by Weaver's guitar playing—in fact he very seldom spoke about anyone else's work, but Weaver obviously (in person anyway) was someone he respected." Throughout his recording career, Weaver continued to live and work in Smoketown. He became a janitor after he and his wife moved to an apartment house in a wealthier section of town.

In April 1927 Weaver journeyed back to New York City to cut vocal-trio religious songs with Sara Martin and her husband Hayes B. Withers. He then expertly backed Sara on "Gonna Ramble Blues" and "Teasing Brown Blues," both of which addressed racism within the black community: "Yellow men are evil, brownskin men are too/Gonna get me a black man to drive away the blues." A week later, Weaver made his singing debut on "True Love Blues" and "Poor Boy Blues," his strong, emotion-choked voice sounding world-weary. In August Weaver recorded four urbane, ballady solo sides and appeared on some Martin releases credited to "Sally Roberts."

His November 1927 follow-up session with Walter Beasley, a Louisville slider and Tampa Red enthusiast, produced more satisfying performances. Weaver played chords and bass fills in standard tuning while Beasley slid in open D, using a capo to accommodate key changes. Beasley's poignant swoops and slides nicely punctuated Weaver's vocals, and Weaver joined in on slide for the good-time "Bottleneck Blues," one of few blues slide duets on 78. After backing Helen Humes on five sides, the guitarists wrapped things up at the end of the month with Weaver's "Black Spider Blues" and four songs sung by Beasley, who sounds like an old man. Weaver, who had apparently had a disagreement with the record company, never recorded again. He returned home and became a chauffeur for the wealthy Lemon family, a position that he held the



rest of his life.

After the death of his first wife, Anna, in 1935, Weaver seldom played guitar or even mentioned that he had ever made records. A dedicated churchgoer, he was remembered by friends as easygoing and dignified. "I've never heard no one say a bad thing about Mr. Weaver," wrote Helen Humes in 1980. "All his Smoketown friends adored him. He was so nice and friendly."

Weaver fell victim to cancer on April 4, 1960, and was buried in Louisville. Among his effects was a royalty statement suggesting that about 5,400 copies of his groundbreaking instrumental, "Guitar Blues"/"Guitar Rag," had been sold. Document's *Sylvester Weaver Complete Recorded Works in Chronological Order*, Vol. 1 and Vol. 2 gathers most of his tracks. Cleaner versions of 1927's "Guitar Rag," "Bottleneck Blues" and "St. Louis Blues" are anthologized on Columbia's *The Slide Guitar--Bottles, Knives & Steel*. Several of the Weaver/Beasley duets are also featured in the PBS documentary *Baseball*.

Brunswick's Acoustic Era Phonographs

By R.J. Wakeman

The first Brunswick phonograph advertisement in Talking Machine World appeared in the June 1916 issue. Six upright models were advertised ranging in price from \$55 to \$200. For their size and quality the prices charged were reasonable in comparison with other machines available at the time. Instead of numbers or names being given to models, early machines were referred to by price. The initial prices charged must have been too low since the November 1916 issue of TMW shows the same models listed for \$15 to \$25 higher.

Most models have a decal under the lid on the lower back panel stating "Brunswick" in large

gold script with "The Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company" beneath in smaller black print. Most models have dual spring-loaded lid supports. Most also have a small gold medallion located near the turntable. Medallions differ in text and ornamentation, but each lists the model and serial number of the cabinet. Referred to as the "maker's medallion," it was intended to authenticate manufacture and protect against fraud.

All Brunswick phonographs that I have seen have a 12-inch turntable and an adjustable shut-off lever attached to the back lower end of the tone arm. All but one model have a black metal motor board. Each motor board has two collapsible finger rings for lifting the motor works. The motor boards usually have two to four oil holes and the location of each hole is often designated by a small decal with the word "oil" in gold letters. The paint used on the black motor boards must be of excellent quality as it is rare to find one with chipped paint. Heavy bolts were used to suspend and hold the motors in place.

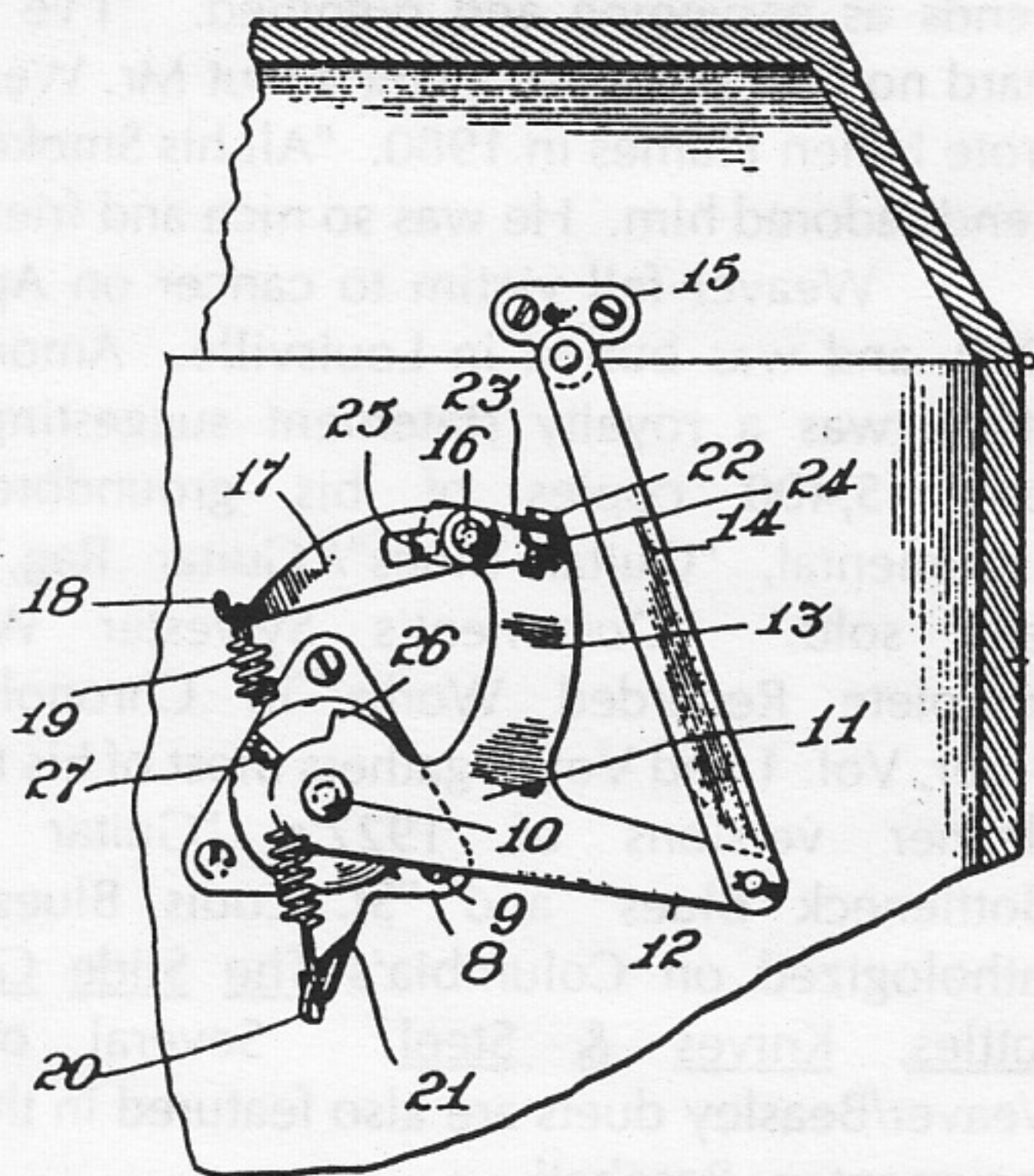
Brunswick manufactured its own motors. The March 1922 issue of Talking Machine World features a full page of photographs of the Brunswick Chicago Motor Plant, and text claims that the plant is a "Marvel of Efficiency" with motors produced under ideal conditions.

Brunswick spring motors are well-designed, running quietly. All have two or three-spring motors and the grease used decades ago to lubricate the springs must have been high quality because the motors rarely require new grease. All spring motors have a bent sheet metal cover under the motor for protection and to catch grease and oil drips. For an extra price electric motors were available.

For a time Brunswick used a two-spring motor in which the springs were arranged in tandem instead of the more usual side by side. This unusual design was developed by company

M. BERSTED.
COVER SUPPORT FOR PHONOGRAPHS.
APPLICATION FILED DEC. 10, 1917.

1,265,874.



Patent drawing for Brunswick's dual spring-loaded lid supports, patented on May 14, 1918.

M. NYSTROM.

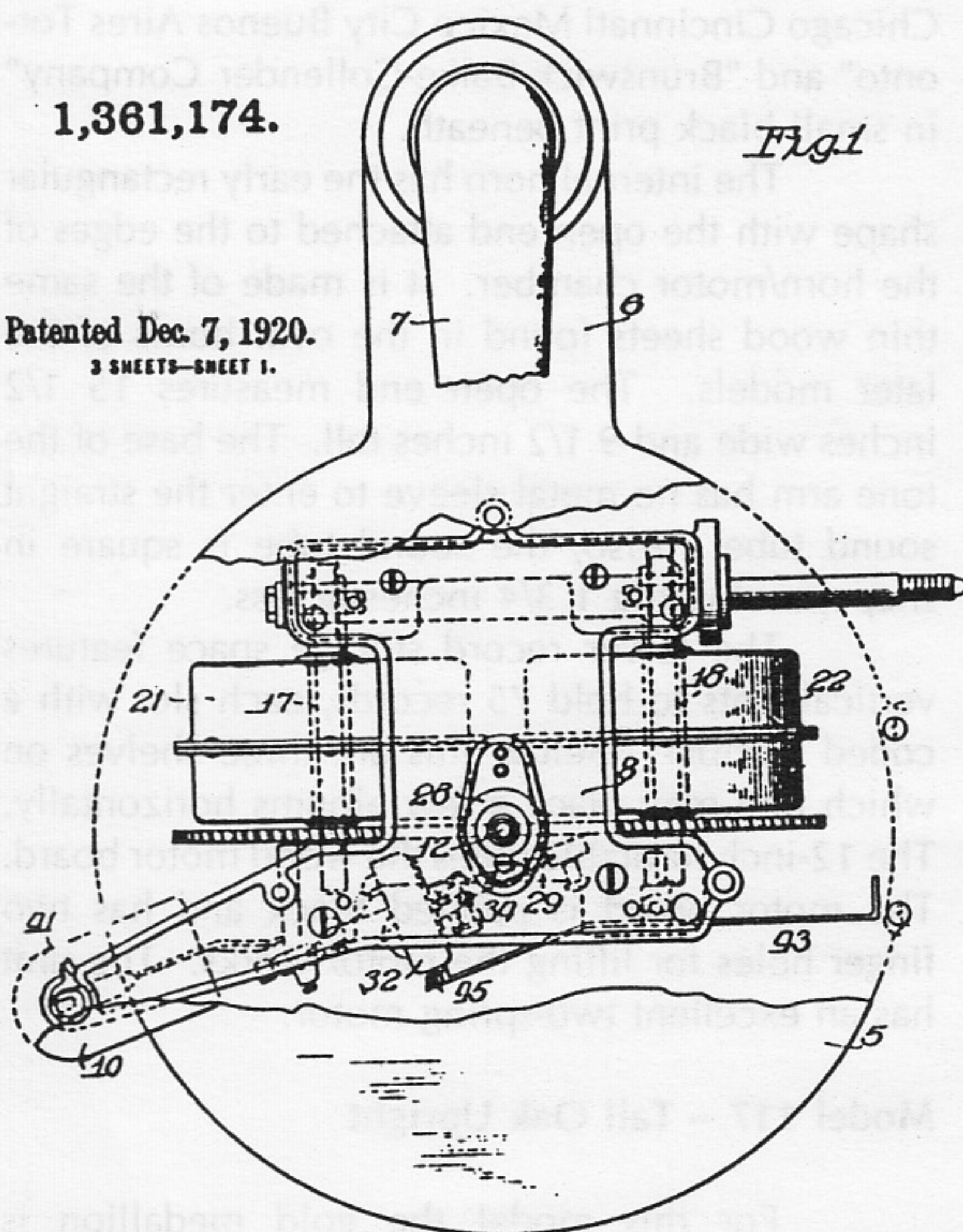
MOTOR.

APPLICATION FILED MAY 20, 1918.

1,361,174.

Patented Dec. 7, 1920.

3 SHEETS—SHEET 1.



Inventor
 Martin Nystrom
 By: *Wm. B. Deal* Atty.

Patent drawing for Martin Nystrom's motor with two springs in tandem (side by side had been typical in the industry). Patent was granted on December 7, 1920.

engineer Martin Nystrom, who developed and patented most of the phonograph improvements for the company during the 1920s. According to the patent description, Nystrom developed this design "to provide a spring motor of simple and comparatively inexpensive construction which can be easily assembled and installed." However, repairman Fred Deal in Sacramento, California, re-

ports that he has worked on several of these motors and finds the design places undue stress on one of the gears.

All Brunswick models that I have examined feature internal horns made of holly or spruce wood. Thin (approximately 3/16-inch thick) sheets of the wood were steam-molded over a form. Early models have rectangular horns which attach to cabinet sides at the open end of the horn/motor chamber.

In September 1918 Brunswick presented new oval-shaped horns. Though obscured from view by the cabinet grilles, the horns are beautiful. The wood surfaces are not finely finished but instead have a rough texture. Most have a simple coat or two of shellac. Two models I observed feature a horn with a layer of white paint.

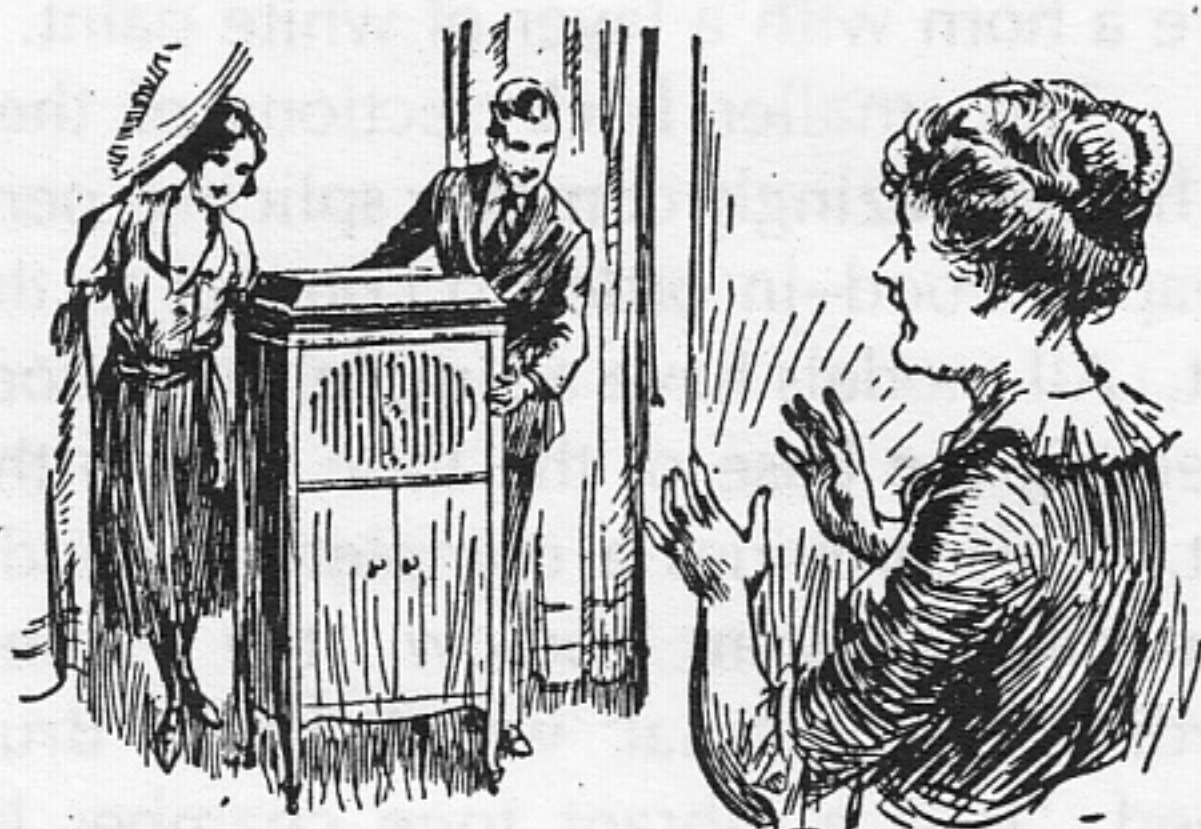
The smaller back sections of the horns often have amazingly complex splicing--perhaps to a cheaper wood--in order to connect to the horn throat. All models have a simple short wood tube connecting the base of the tone arm to the horn throat. This provides a completely wood sound reproducing system below the tone arm. Regarding its internal wood horn, Brunswick claimed, "It is a vibrant tone chamber like the sounding board of a piano or violin. Constructed entirely of molded hollywood and free from metal it gives the requisite resiliency for unfolding and projecting true tone."

When new, each Brunswick phonograph came with a set of 10 and 12-inch record albums. These have black covers with a rough textured surface. Two cover designs were used. One features the embossed imprint of the logo of the early Brunswick record label, while the second has the word "Brunswick" in large print with "Phonographs and Records" immediately below. The album spines often have a large black letter set in a gold or silver circle. Inside, the record sleeves appear to be made of poor-quality paper because the pages today are often disintegrating and tear easily. Brunswick also produced a series of accessory items such as steel needles, needle tins and envelopes, and record dusters.

Large Mahogany Upright

This is the only Brunswick model I examined which did not have a gold medallion near the turntable. It is the \$150 model but has no plate or tag stating the model name or number. Evidently it is an early Ultona model. It has a small gold key to lock the lid. It has gold plated metal parts except for the reproducer. The 12-inch turntable has a maroon velvet cover. The decal is special, located under the lid in the center (not on

Join This Conspiracy *Mothers' Day Club*



Surprise Your Mother on May 8th—Mothers' Day with a Brunswick

We have a secret we want to share with you—but we can't publish the details here. We have a wonderful plan for you to use in honoring your Mother on the day that's named for her.

We call it our Mothers' Day Club. All the details we explain personally, but not in print. But it's a splendid idea, conceived by Brunswick, and one which you'll appreciate.

This part we can tell—on Mothers' Day your Mother will be given a tremendous surprise.

We deliver to her a Brunswick Phonograph (Model 112) and a special collection of Brunswick Records, and—but the rest is part of the secret.

The Mothers' Day Club makes it easy for you to honor her in this delightful manner. It affords her a permanent reminder, a constant pleasure.

Come in at once and let us tell you the plans personally. Never has such an offer been made before.

The time is short—so come in at once.



Model 112

Brunswick viewed Mothers' Day as an opportunity to move machines in a season when "the market was otherwise very quiet," as TMW's May 1921 issue puts it. The model 112 was pushed.

the back panel) and oval in shape. It states in large gold letters, "Brunswick" with "New York Chicago Cincinnati Mexico City Buenos Aires Toronto" and "Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company" in small black print beneath.

The internal horn has the early rectangular shape with the open end attached to the edges of the horn/motor chamber. It is made of the same thin wood sheets found in the oval horns of the later models. The open end measures 15 1/2 inches wide and 9 1/2 inches tall. The base of the tone arm has no metal sleeve to enter the straight sound tube. Also, the sound tube is square in shape, measuring 1 3/4 inches across.

The lower record storage space features vertical slots to hold 75 records, each slot with a coded number. Below this are three shelves on which one may place a few albums horizontally. The 12-inch turntable hides the wood motor board. The motor board is painted black and has two finger holes for lifting the motor works. The unit has an excellent two-spring motor.

Model 117 -- Tall Oak Upright

For this model the gold medallion is located near a front corner of the motor board frame. It measures 1 7/8 inches in diameter and states "The Brunswick" in large print and "All Phonographs In One" beneath in small print. It also lists the model, serial number, and five patent dates. The open end of the oval wood horn measures 15 1/2 inches wide by 11 inches tall. Hardware is gold plated (except for reproducers) and the 12-inch turntable has a green velvet cover. The unit has a well-designed, quiet two spring motor. On the cabinet's side in back of the crank is a small gold knob for the "volume control" sound muffler. The lower record storage features five pull-out drawers for holding records vertically. Each drawer has a matching oak front measuring 3 1/8 inches wide. Each drawer has a separate gold letter ("A" through "E") glued to the center of the drawer front. Beneath these drawers are two shelves to hold record albums horizontally.

Model 200 -- Small Oak Upright

This model has the single diaphragm Ultona reproducer used on phonographs with smaller motors. An Edison stylus mounted in a metal shank could be used to play Diamond Discs. The medallion--not gold plated but with a gun metal finish--depicts a young lady in rapture, hands clasped, while listening to a Brunswick upright phonograph with the lid open, the Ultona tone arm and reproducer in open view. It also lists the model and serial number and a series of patent dates in tiny, barely readable print. The tone arm and other hardware are nickel plated. The turn-

table has a green felt cover. The opening of the oval wood horn measures 14 1/2 inches wide by 8 3/4 inches high; it has a coat of white paint. The record storage section features several shelves for holding 10- or 12-inch albums horizontally. A single door is in front of the record storage shelves.

The icon of a young lady listening to the Brunswick phonograph--"The Brunswick Girl"--became prominent in advertisements in 1918. Life-sized color cut-outs of the lady clasping her hands while listening were supplied to dealers. Large steel signs for outdoor use were also made. These measured 10 X 28 inches and had baked on colors, making the signs weatherproof.



MRS. JOCKO: WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH THAT FOOL-ACTING ELEPHANT?
MR. " OH HE'S JUST HEARD THAT THOSE *Brunswick-Balke-Collender-Co* HUNTERS ARE
GATHERING SHELLAC FOR PHONOGRAPH RECORDS AND NOT IVORY FOR BILLIARD BALLS

From the September 1922 issue of Talking Machine World. The punchline is not hilarious but does remind us that Brunswick was as known for billiards equipment as for phonographs and records. India was the chief source of shellac. Prices for shellac depended upon the exchange rate of India's rupee into pounds sterling, and then the exchange rate of sterling and dollars.

Brunswick vs Victor: The Legal Battles

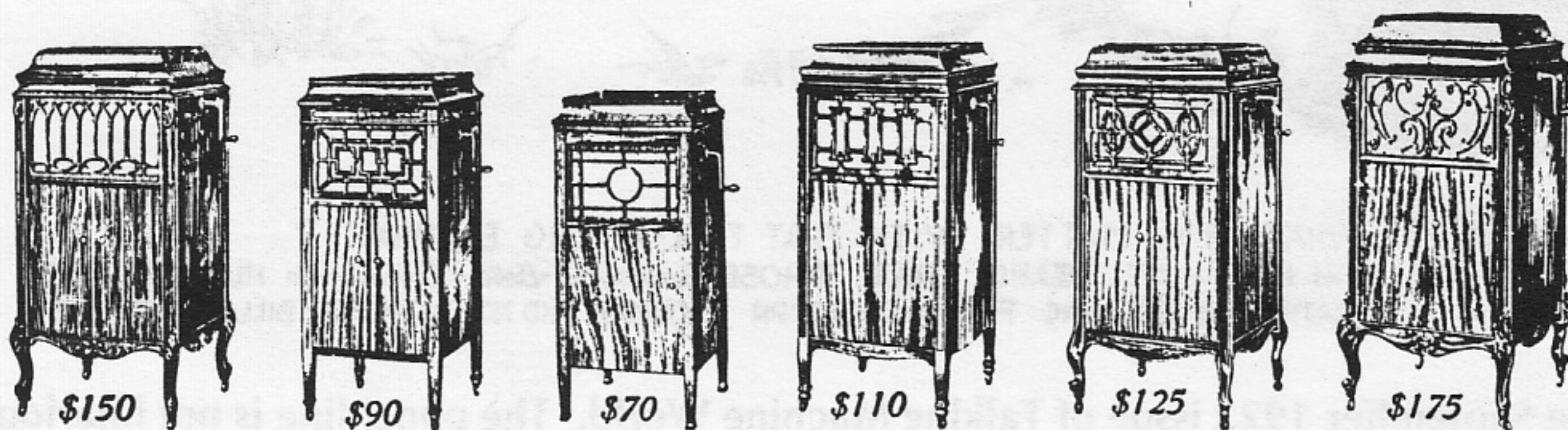
By R.J. Wakeman

Brunswick had been selling phonographs since 1916. Why did the Victor Talking Machine Company wait several years before bringing suit against Brunswick for infringement of the basic Eldridge R. Johnson patents? Was it consideration of the large size and success of the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company? Was Victor waiting to learn of the outcome of its suit (unsuccessful, it turned out) against the Cheney Talking Machine Company? In the early 1920's Victor brought suit against Brunswick (also against the General Phonograph Corporation because it made the Ultona tone arms used on the Brunswick phonographs). The results of these two trials were for dismissal of the suits, but Victor appealed and in 1922 brought suit against both Brunswick and General Phonograph in the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. The case was heard on February 6, 1923.

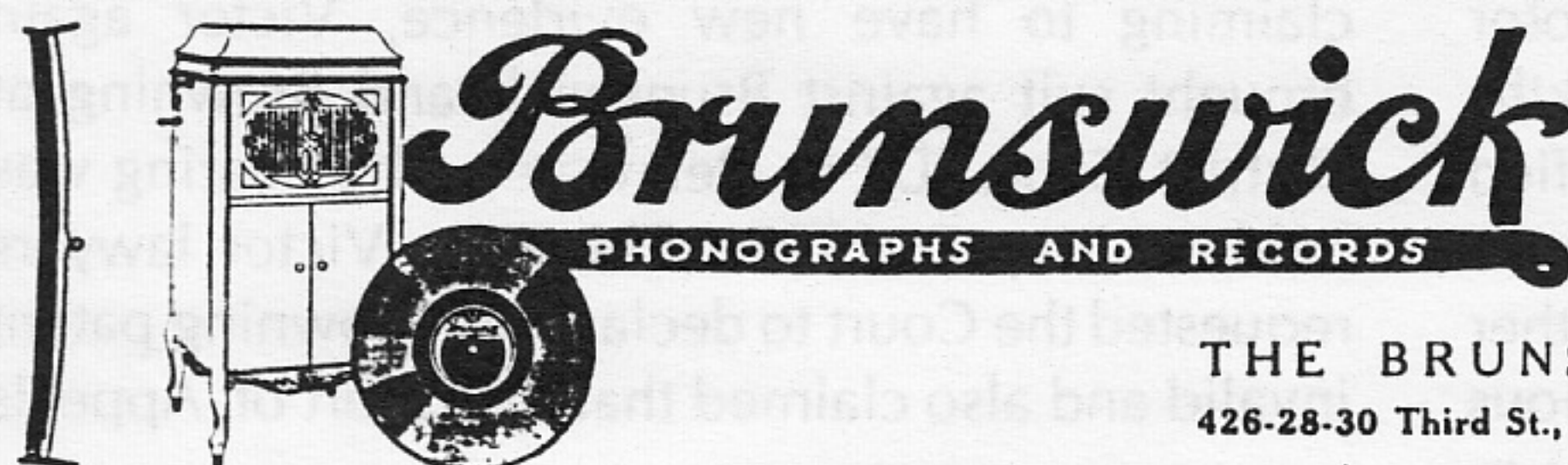
Victor claimed that two 1906 Eldridge R. Johnson patents were being violated. One concerned the "basic structure and means of attachment of the horn" (patent No. 814,786); the other concerned the "amplifying horn comprising a continuously tapering tube" (patent No. 814,848). After due consideration the Court declared that, as was the case for the results of Victor versus Cheney, the Victor patents were still valid but not infringed by the design of the Ultona tone arm and the Brunswick phonograph horn con-

nections. Applying the "strict rules of proof" required in such cases, the Court was not convinced by Victor's presentation.

The Ultona tone arm has two sections. The smaller piece which attaches to the reproducer has a slight taper for the first one-third of the distance but the rest is a straight tube so that it can telescope in or out of the second back section as required by the type of record being played. The back section is tapered and the larger open end has a 90-degree turn that extends into a large metal ring which supports the weight of the tone arm and permits horizontal movement. This support ring is attached to the cabinet by three strong wood screws. Below the open end of the tone arm the sound waves enter a straight wood tube before passing into the small end of the horn opening. The design from the reproducer connection to the open end of the horn is not "continuously tapered." About three-quarters of the distance is cylindrical and one-quarter is tapered. Nor is the horn supported by the connective structure at the tone arm's open end. Instead, it is supported by the cabinet. Any support given to the horn at the communicating portion of the horn and tube was declared by the Court to be "only incidental, and a bracing against vibration rather than a carrying of the weight burden" (pages 335-339 of The Federal Reporter, Volume 286, 1923.)



At first Brunswick models were identified by price, such as here from TMW's September 1917 issue. Curiously, Victor waited a few years before bringing suit against Brunswick for patents violations.



For Minneapolis

and adjacent territory

Distributing Branch

THE BRUNSWICK-BALKE-COLLENDER CO.

426-28-30 Third St., South

E. L. Kern, Branch Mgr.

Furthermore, the Court declared that in the original Johnson patent the shape of the tone arm was not then noticed by anyone as a feature of any importance. The interest and attention were centered upon another feature of Johnson's machine, although the Court admitted that "the questions involved are not free from difficulty." The Court expressed doubts that Johnson's substituting a tapered tone arm for a straight one in an existing structure may have involved any real invention. Concerning the original Johnson patent (#814,818), officially witnessed by H.J. Hartman and E.W. Vaill, Jr., on February 9, 1904, the Court record states, "...if the exhibit shown to these witnesses and identified by them...had contained a straight tone arm instead of a tapered one, they would have identified it just as completely and in just the same good faith."

The Court believed Johnson's thought and inspiration were in developing a mechanism which removed the weight of the horn from traveling the record grooves and retarding needle action. The mechanism he developed was an articulating tone arm which would maintain the sound reproducing qualities and support the horn's weight by a separate means. The Court even declared that Johnson's contribution to the art was not a great one and did not give him a monopoly of the industry to which his theories would lead and his claims should be strictly considered and limited.

The Door Dispute -- Patent No. 946,442

Victor and Brunswick collided on another matter. It does not seem to have prevented Brunswick or Victor from placing wood doors in front of the internal horns of their machines, but

both companies for a time held conflicting patents regarding these "volume control" doors. On January 12, 1906 Eldridge R. Johnson filed a patent for "a plurality of doors" to regulate the sound issuing from the open end of an enclosed horn in a cabinet talking machine. It was granted January 11, 1910, assigned patent number 946,442.

On January 8, 1908, John Bailey Browning filed a patent for the same device. The U.S. Patent Office, however, realized there was a potential conflict of interest with the Johnson patent and hesitated to grant the patent. Then in June of 1915 the Patent Office suggested that Browning alter his application by copying word-for-word the claims in issue directly from the Johnson patent. This was done for the purpose of holding an interference hearing at the Patent Office. At the hearing the Patent Office Examiner of Interferences awarded priority to Browning, but a short time later the Patent Office Commissioner and Chief Board of Examiners reversed the decision and awarded priority to Eldridge Johnson. This did not satisfy Browning, who on March 7, 1921 filed suit against Johnson at the District of Columbia Court of Appeals.

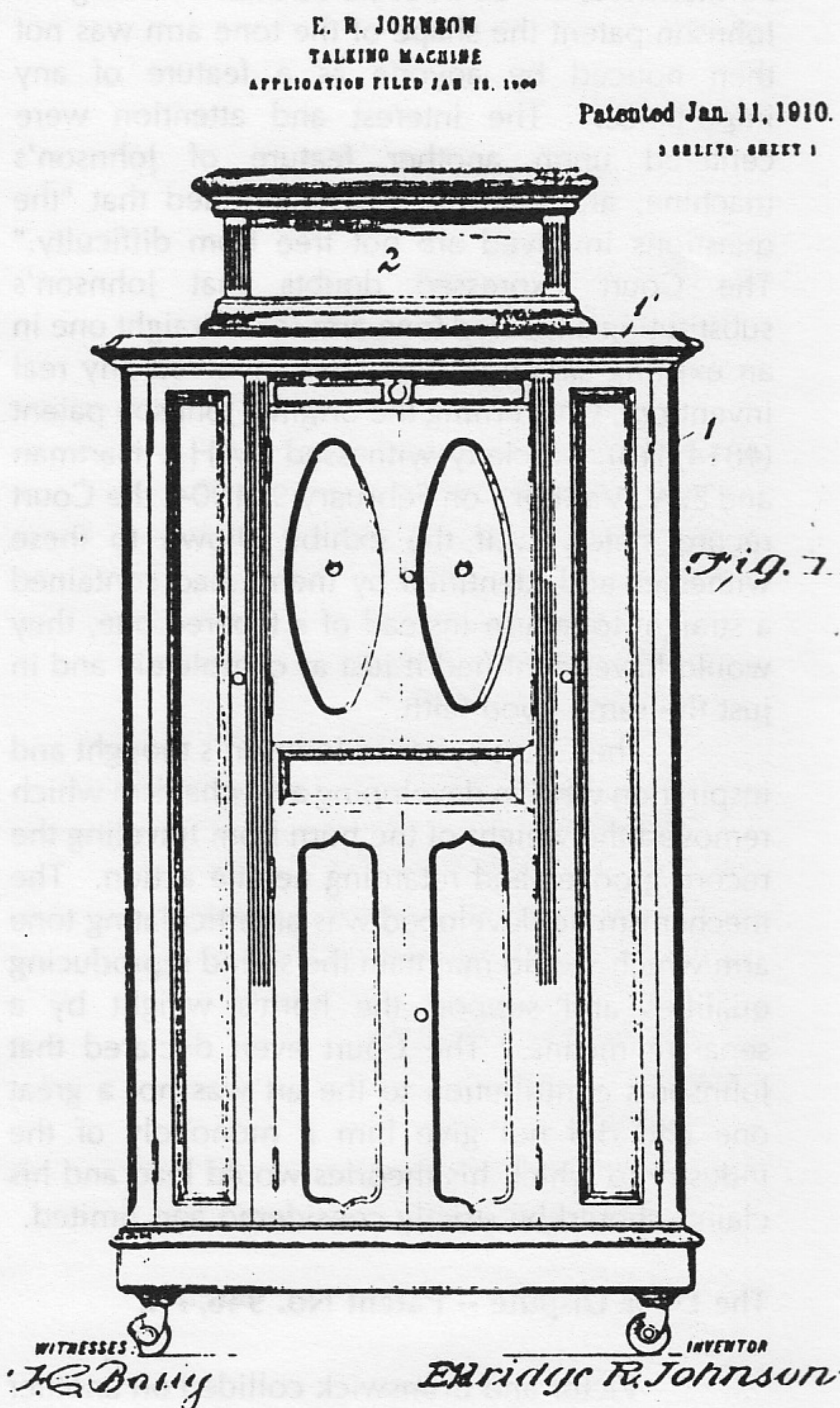
At the hearing Browning was able to provide evidence that he was the true and original inventor. In 1897 on the back of a dance card he had prepared a rough drawing of an external horn talking machine held within a small wood cabinet with two hinged doors in front of the horn. He had the foresight to sign the drawing and have two companions also sign as witnesses. Soon after this Browning developed more detailed drawings and even constructed several rough models, which clearly disclosed the invention. Then in 1901 Browning was employed by the new Victor Talking

'Machine Company, of which Eldridge R. Johnson was president. Browning worked as a motor inspector, which indicates to some extent his skills and knowledge of the business. Browning testified that over the next few years he had three times discussed his invention with Johnson and other Victor executives but they did not express serious interest. During this time Browning also went to a Philadelphia lawyer, Horace Petit, to procure a patent for his invention. But Petit was also the attorney for Johnson and the new Victor Company. The price named by Petit for procuring the patent seemed unduly high. Browning decided to take some time to consider further action.

At the Court of Appeals hearing Eldridge Johnson failed to testify on the excuse of illness. Since Victor was unable to discredit the evidence and witnesses presented by Browning, the Court reversed the results of the Patent Office hearing and awarded the patent priority to Browning, holding that Johnson derived the invention in question from Browning. The decision of the Court was also recorded at the U.S. Patent Office. On January 18, 1922, the Patent Office finally granted John Bailey Browning his patent, assigned number 1,402,738. By this time Browning had consigned 51/100 of his patent to the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company. Not content with these results and realizing that in legal terms the decision of a Court of Appeals is not technically a judgement, Victor prepared another case against both Browning and the Brunswick company, filing suit at District Court "D" in Delaware.

The hearing was held on March 9, 1922. Victor presented a bill of complaint and requested the Court to enjoin Browning and the Brunswick company from bringing infringement suits based upon their patent. The Court heard evidence from plaintiff and defendants but found itself in doubt of its own legal jurisdiction. Precedent cases were considered and it was decided that a District Court of the United States may "entertain jurisdiction over a counterclaim for infringement of patents." The court, not impressed with Victor's case, denied its request for relief from possible legal action.

Still not content with these results and claiming to have new evidence, Victor again brought suit against Brunswick and Browning at District Court "D" in Delaware. The hearing was held on May 7, 1923. This time Victor lawyers requested the Court to declare the Browning patent invalid and also claimed that the Court of Appeals



Patent drawing for #946,442. Was it based upon John Browning's 1897 idea about hinged doors?

decision was not conclusive of either patentability or priority. Numerous exhibits, depositions, and testimony were taken in open court.

Johnson claimed that at the time of filing his patent application in January 1906 he was the true and original inventor, deriving no part of his knowledge or information of the invention from Browning or anyone else. Further, in the fall of 1903 Johnson had built a demonstration machine embodying the invention. It had been called the "Small Medara"--named for a worker at the plant--and was well known to workers and officials there. Several witnesses testified to having seen the machine and that it "demonstrated the complete success of the invention." Witnesses claimed that the invention was followed by a long period of internal horn designs and development. Since August 1906 Johnson had, through the Victor Talking Machine Company, placed thousands of machines with double doors on the market.

After Victor had presented its case, the defendants (Brunswick-Browning) rested their case without offering any evidence. They claimed the decision of the Court of Appeals to be a decision with all the incidents and consequences of a judgement and conclusive as presented. Once again the Court considered several dozen earlier precedent cases with numerous and conflicting decisions. It ultimately decided to give due consideration and validity to the finding of the Court of Appeals. Johnson's evidence failed to convince the court since most of the testimony was not documentary but based on the recollections of witnesses. Even the drawings of the Small Medara cabinet did not show doors in front of the horn. The final decision of the Court again awarded priority to the Browning patent.

However, in an almost surprise move, the Court also declared the Browning patent to be void on the ground of abandonment. On April 4, 1911, John Browning had for unknown reasons, by amendment, removed the crucial Claim 1 on his patent application. He did not reinstate the clause until June 1915. Under the guideline that the public interest requires that applicants not be lack-

ing in diligence and since the four-year delay was not adequately explained, the Court declared the Browning patent void for abandonment.

These results failed to satisfy either Brunswick or Victor and on July 6, 1925, both companies filed cross complaints at the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. Victor had eight lawyers appearing for its case, but the Court did not spend much time considering arguments and confirmed the conclusions and decrees by the Delaware Court. The Johnson patent was held invalid due to prior invention and the Browning patent was held invalid due to abandonment.

On November 23, 1925 Brunswick filed suit against Victor again at the Third Circuit Court of Appeals but was denied a hearing. On March 14, 1927 Victor petitioned the Third Circuit Court of Appeals for a writ to review the records of previous hearings. The court reviewed them but affirmed the 1923 decision of District Court "D" in Delaware. The U.S. Supreme Court's refusal to hear the appeals meant that John Bailey Browning was still the declared inventor of the internal horn talking machine--inventor of the Victrola!

Dispute Over Patent No. 896,059

Page 164 of the March 1921 issue of Talking Machine World mentions yet another patent dispute between the companies: "On March 8, 1921, the Victor Talking Machine Company filed its bill of complaint against the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co. in the United States District Court at Wilmington, Del., in which State the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co. is incorporated, for infringement of the Johnson cut record patent, No. 896,059, dated August 11, 1908. Injunction is sought against the manufacture, sale or use of the Brunswick lateral cut record in violation of the Johnson patent, together with an accounting for damages and profits." Victor failed to secure the injunction, and Brunswick soon rivaled Victor as the nation's leading machine and record manufacturer, probably attaining for a brief time number one status in the trade by the end of 1924.

Continuation of the Brunswick Story: The Company Responds to Radio

By R.J. Wakeman

By 1923 radio was fast gaining acceptance among the American public. Executives of the phonograph and record industry worried about competition. Already there was evidence that the sales of phonographs were down and the accepted explanation was that money that might have been spent for a phonograph was being diverted to purchase a radio receiver. More than 500 transmitters were crowding the airways and new broadcasting stations were appearing everywhere.

Anyone who could connect tubes and coils into a 5-watt transmitter and set out a broadcasting antenna could be heard for at least some distance. To be legally airborne one needed only a license from the U.S. Bureau of Navigation. Newspapers, stores, factories, colleges, churches, individuals--anyone could own a station. In many cases they were legally on the air only a few hours a day or week. Not much space was required for the broadcasting equipment. Much of the extra air time was filled by playing records, and it is ironic that one of the essential items for a broadcasting station was a nearby phonograph.

By July the effects of radio were felt in many areas. Sales of radios continued to expand rapidly as the sales of records, sheet music, and even musical instruments declined. Theater producers claimed radio was causing poor attendance at live performances. Radio was blamed for nearly every ill in the community. Record companies began to recognize the power that radio had on record sales. Sometimes when a radio artist performed a song, sales of records featuring that song surged upwards.

The June 1923 issue of The Wireless Age includes an article titled "Will the Great Artists Continue?" by one Ward Seeley, who asked executives of phonograph and record companies whether their artists were allowed to broadcast (the

article is reprinted in issues 83, 85, and 87 of New Amberola Graphic). Only Victor and Brunswick were emphatic in their right to prohibit their artists from performing for radio audiences.

At this time Victor executives did not allow exclusive artists to perform on radio. Supplementary agreements were secured from its artists specifically prohibiting broadcasting. If they wished to broadcast, they had to obtain permission in advance, but as Seeley puts it, Victor "is not at all inclined to give such consent." Company officials stated that for the present they found radio's sound quality to be poor--radio was more a toy than a fine instrument for music.

The Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company was less strict in its application of the no broadcasting rule and in special situations exclusive artists were allowed to broadcast. A.J. Kendrick, General Sales Manager of Brunswick's Phonograph Division, stated, "We have felt radio requires some further development and improvement before a worthy transmission of an artist could be an entirely dependable procedure." But Brunswick's policy was also stated this way: "Radio, to the degree that it helps to advance good music[,] would assist rather than retard the phonograph business." Before a Brunswick artist could broadcast, the company would first investigate the program and quality of the transmitter.

Columbia's assistant general manager H.A. Yerkes stated to Seeley, "We have no set policy directed against radio." Radio and the talking machine were considered to occupy two separate fields with only a small degree of overlap. J. Wolff, vice president of the Sonora Phonograph Company, said the company was observing the progress of radio broadcasting but radio was in its infancy so it was too soon to know what effect it would have on phonograph and record sales.

H.B. Schaad, Secretary of the Aeolian Company, reported to Seeley that radio sales had not hurt Aeolian sales, and company policy was complete cooperation with broadcasters though executives would continue to follow developments. He also believed that entirely too much music was being broadcast, stating that music should not be broadcast more often than three times a week since too much music could satiate the public. (Page 54 of the November 1924 issue of Talking Machine World reports that Aeolian worked with RCA to broadcast programs from October 20 to 24, 1924.)

Otto Heineman, president of the General

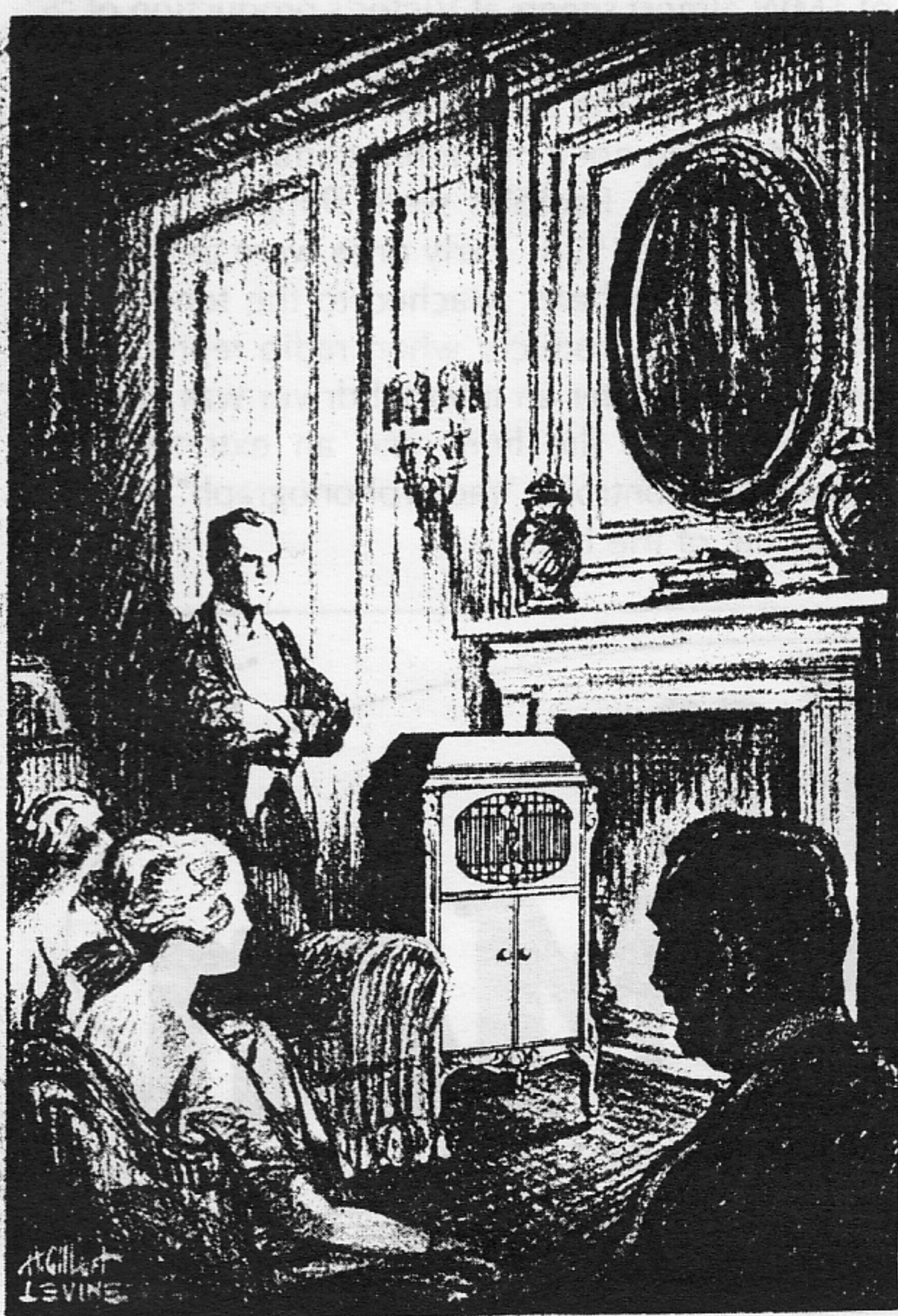
Phonograph Corporation, which made Okeh records and phonograph motors and tone arms, said, "Radio has a very beneficial effect on the sale of phonograph records. People who hear the latest hits by radio of course want to hear them again, and they do not want to have to wait until they are sent out again by a broadcasting station."

A.H. Curry, general manager of Thomas A. Edison, Inc., said to Seeley, "We are not at all concerned about radio competition. We have seen no effect on our business....The Edison company is not very keen about the matter of exclusive contracts with its artists, the policy being to let the quality of Edison reproduction speak for itself." He added that people wanted to own records to play anytime they wished whereas radio's strength was in delivering news, covering public events, and covering sporting events--not in transmitting music.

On May 10, 1923, a celebration of the Volunteers of America was held at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. Performances were broadcast by stations WJZ and WEA. Victor contralto Louise Homer and Brunswick tenor Mario Chamlee sang for the charity event. Since they were not paid and the broadcasting was incidental (the singers later claimed they were not told that the event would be broadcast), neither was considered to have violated contracts.

The Year 1924

Brunswick executives, recognizing that the radio industry was strong and expanding, signed an agreement with the Radio Corporation of America allowing the latter to install D.C. Radiolas in Brunswick phonographs. An advertisement in the March 1924 issue of Talking Machine World contained statements by both RCA and Brunswick, the latter declaring, "We appreciate the fact that the trade has been expectantly awaiting a declaration from us regarding Radio, but not until the most recent achievement--the perfection of the Radiola Super-Heterodyne--have we felt confident of the permanent value to our trade in existent radio offerings...The higher priced models will be



Typical advertisement stressing a high-class product. From before the Brunswick Radiola era.

fitted with Super-Heterodyne selective and non-radiating Radiolas...Less priced instruments will be furnished with the Regenoflex, which is also a highly selective non-radiating Radiola. The least expensive instruments will be equipped with the No. 3a and the No. 3, all the latest achievement of the Radio Corporation of America..."

Brunswick was proud of its alliance with RCA, stressing in advertisements that the Brunswick Radiola was "the only phonograph equipped with, and designed for, the famous Radiola Super-Heterodyne." The Victor Talking Machine Company, in contrast, would not ally itself with a radio company until May 19, 1925, when it finally announced that RCA would install Radiola super-heterodyne radio receiving units in Victrolas. By July 1924 Brunswick advertised the eminent delivery to dealers of the Brunswick Radiola models 160, 260, and 360 while Victor only manufactured variations of the console models 215, 400, 405, and 410 that allowed dealers on their own to add receiving sets to their Victrolas. The letter "S" was added to Victrola model numbers to indicate "Special." In August 1924 the Colin B. Kennedy Corporation introduced receivers "mounted on standard panels which the dealer can fit right into

the Victrola without [additional] cabinet work." A Zenith advertisement in the September 1924 issue of TMW indicates Zenith produced panels that would slip into the specially made, or "S," Victrolas. In the January 1925 issue of TMW Victor itself ran advertisements promoting the Victrola-Radio combination, stressing flexibility by proclaiming, "You can quickly equip a Victrola with whatever radio set you prefer" (emphasis added). This did not satisfy market demand, as evident by Victor in May 1925 following Brunswick's example by signing an agreement with RCA.

Introducing the Brunswick Radiola model 35, an advertisement in the September 1924 issue of TMW almost sneers at Victor's production of "S" Victrolas into which owners could add any radio. It proudly calls the Brunswick Radiola "a manufactured product, not a makeshift combination." The first Brunswick Radiolas were shipped to dealers around August 1924. Early ones were designed to have a speaker head attached to the tone arm in place of the reproducer when radio reproduction was desired. Later an internal driver was attached at the back of the horn and an external knob installed to control a "radio/phonograph" valve in the throat of the horn.



Mr. Radio Man

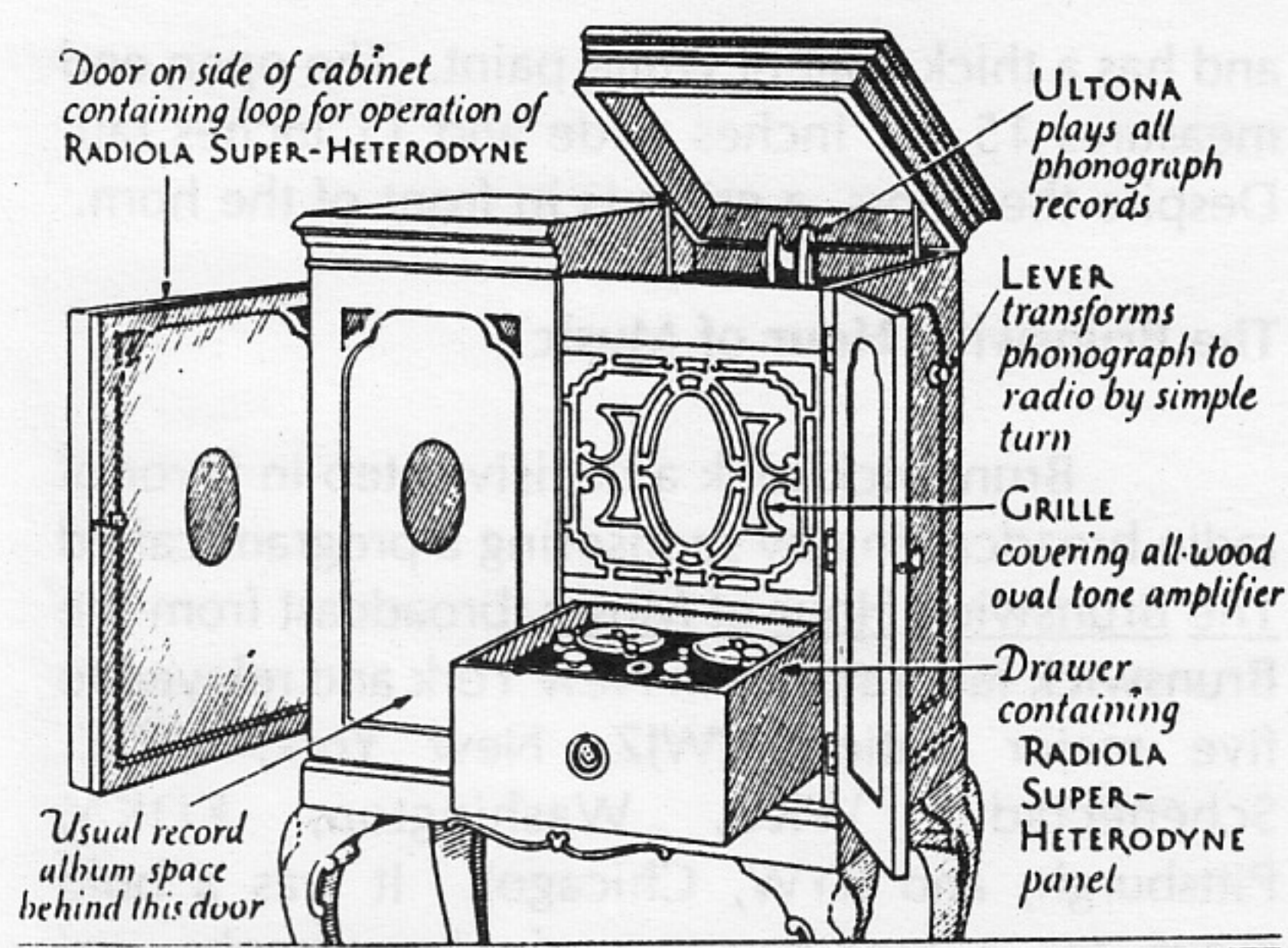
Tell My Mammy To Come Back Home

Mis - ter Ra - di - o man - Tell my Mam - my to come back home,

You can't go wrong With any FEIST song

MADE IN THE U.S.A.

From TMW's February 1924 issue. Radio was finally popular enough for songs to be written about it. This one is a variation of the popular 1901 "telephone" song "Hello Central, Give Me Heaven."



The Brunswick Radiola 460, introduced in January 1925, was one of Brunswick's finest. For a year only Brunswick made phonographs equipped with RCA's "Radiola super-heterodyne." Then, in May 1925, Victor signed an agreement with RCA.

Console models dominated the trade. The Brunswick Radiola models 210, 212, and 217 were introduced in early 1925, and page 185 of the March 1925 issue of TMW stressed that these upright models were designed specially for "people living in farming communities" as well as suburbs, which suggests that uprights were viewed as old-fashioned but demand was strong nonetheless. A receiving set (IIIA) was held in a pull-out drawer below the motor and above shelves for albums.

Around this time Brunswick cabinet factories began using lacquer for the finish on its fine quality phonographs and other wood products. The adoption of lacquer sprays meant that it was possible to use various whitewoods, such as pine, gum, beech, spruce, and holly for external cabinet trim. These woods, which could not be used with regular stain and varnish, had previously been used mostly for bracing and internal cabinet support. Now it was possible to spray over the whitewoods with layers of dark lacquer and have them gradually blend with the larger veneer areas of the cabinets. This permitted the production of some

amazingly beautiful cabinets. After 1926 almost all Brunswick phonograph and radio cabinets used whitewood trim.

Brunswick Console (Model 60) with DC Radiola

Introduced in January 1925, along with the more expensive Brunswick Radiola 460, the Model 60 is a medium-sized console in dark mahogany—a handsome cabinet. It has gold plated hardware with the standard Ultona reproducer on one half of the cabinet, a RCA Radiola on the other. Separate lids cover the phonograph and radio sides. Both lids have dual spring-loaded lid supports.

The horn is located in the center of the cabinet. The phonograph has a green felt-covered 12-inch turntable and the standard 2-spring motor. The large open end of the Ultona tone arm has the standard 1 1/4 inch diameter circular sleeve extending into the wood tube below, which in this case angles towards the center of the cabinet.

A radio driver is attached to the horn at the back end near the throat. At the side of the cabinet near the crank is a small gold plated switch for "Phonograph" or "Radio." Over the horn grille is a cleverly designed door which lifts down and then disappears back and under the horn chamber. The grille has an Oriental design. The horn has the usual oval shape with a beautiful light color finish. It is 15 inches wide and 10 1/2 inches tall.

The DC radio has a small metal plate which states, "Brunswick-Radiola Super Heterodyne (Second Harmonic) Supplied To The Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co. by Radio Corp. of America." It has six small tubes and two large station-selector dials. Running along a side of the Radiola unit is a small wood channel to hold extra tubes. The channel has a matching wood lid.

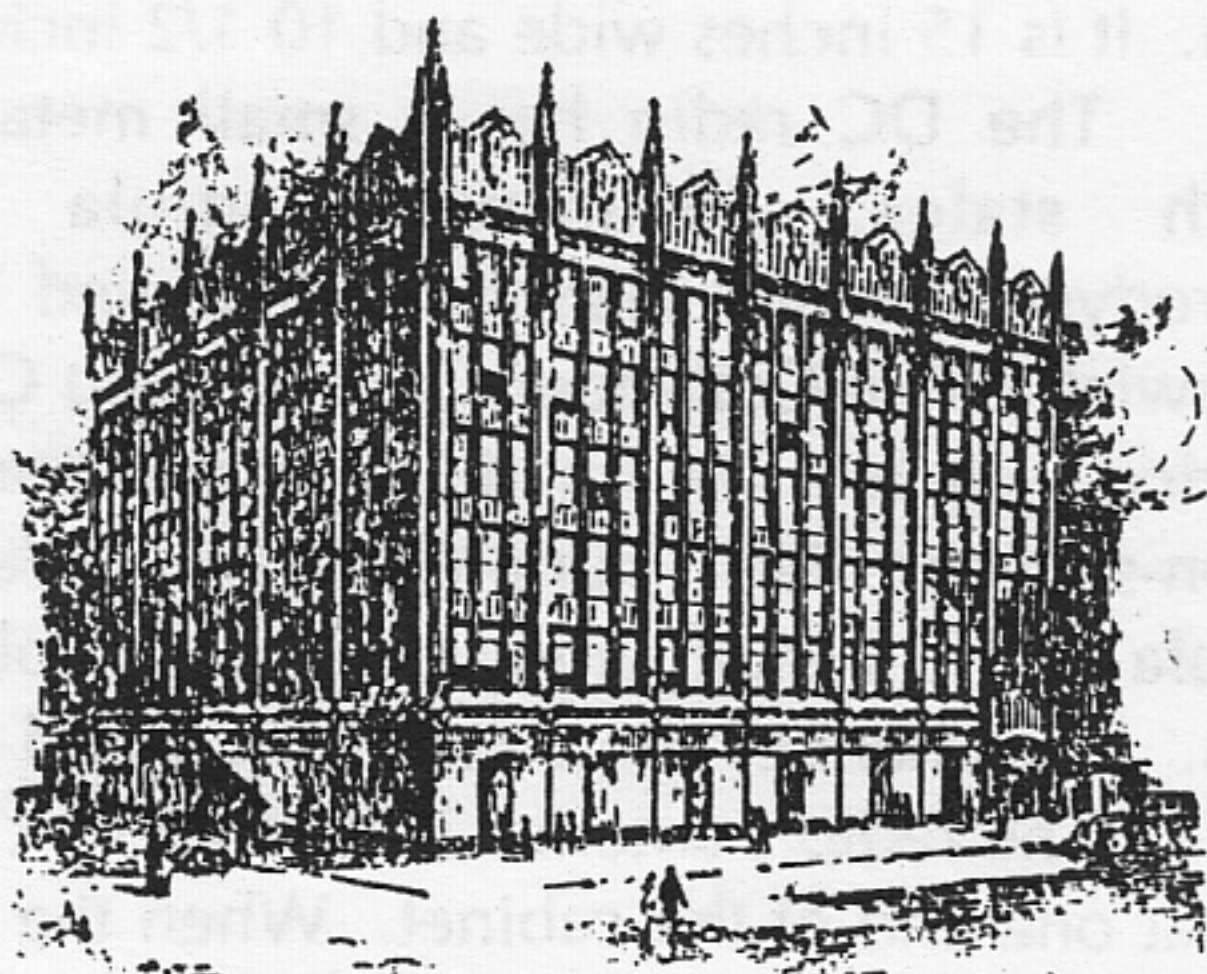
The radio's antenna is located in a special door at one end of the cabinet. When the door is opened, the long wire antenna can be seen wound around a wood frame. Station reception can be enhanced if one changes the open position of the door. At the back of the cabinet are small compartments to hold "A" and "B" batteries.

By February 1925 the company had introduced to the trade seven Brunswick Radiola models: the 35, 60, 100, 160, 260, 360, and 460.

Gotham 1100 Model – Large Console

This is a tall console model without a lid on top. Instead, there are two large doors at the front which cover the turntable chamber and horn on one side and the Radiola compartment and record storage shelves on the other. This model has the Ultona tone arm and reproducer, but the stylus bar no longer contains the extension for playing Pathé records. By this time Pathé was concentrating on its Actuelle and Perfect labels, both being lateral records.

The 12-inch turntable is powered by an AC electric motor made by the Efficiency Electric Corporation of New York and Lovell, Massachusetts. The motor is encased in a metal housing. Instead of the usual two or three-ball governor for speed control, it has a fly-weight centrifugal-action governor which makes and breaks continual electrical contact. It also has an internal electric light to illuminate the turntable chamber. This model has the usual black metal motor board with the finger lifts. The oval internal horn is made of the standard thin molded wood



The New Brunswick Building

On January 15, 1924, executive offices moved from 35 West 32nd Street in New York City to the above building at 52nd Street and 7th Ave.

and has a thick coat of white paint. The open end measures 15 1/2 inches wide and 11 inches tall. Despite the doors, a grille is in front of the horn.

The Brunswick Hour of Music

Brunswick took a decisive step in favor of radio broadcasting by sponsoring a program called The Brunswick Hour of Music, broadcast from the Brunswick laboratories in New York and relayed to five major stations (WJZ, New York; WGY, Schenectady; WRC, Washington; KDKA, Pittsburgh; and KYW, Chicago). It was a bold move for a manufacturer of phonographs and records. According to page 168 of the December 1924 issue of Talking Machine World, the opening program was aired at 10:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time on Tuesday, December 9, and featured tenor Mario Chamlee, soprano Florence Easton, pianist Elly Ney, and the Cleveland Orchestra. According to TMW the next broadcast was planned for December 16 and would feature "Ray Miller's Orchestra, Ohman and Arden, pianists; Marion Harris, Margaret Young and Wright and Bessinger, 'The Radio Franks.'"

Victor followed Brunswick's example. On December 23, 1924 Eldridge R. Johnson, along with AT&T's vice president, issued a statement that Victor was turning to radio as a publicity medium. Page 18 of the January 1925 issue of TMW states that Victor was broadcasting "primarily for the purpose of popularizing the company's records." An editorial on page 10 of the January 1925 issue of TMW praises first Brunswick and then Victor for taking these steps. On New Year's night, 1925, Victor sponsored the first of a planned bi-weekly radio concert series. It was broadcast from New York by station WEAJ and performers included tenor John McCormack (with the Shannon Four on "Adeste Fideles"), soprano Lucrezia Bori, and the Victor Salon Orchestra led by Nat Shilkret. Artists were introduced on the air by Calvin G. Child. Victor placed advertisements in newspapers on the 31st announcing "The beginning of a new era in radio broadcasting." Stores selling radios also ran



advertisements in newspapers and made last-minute offers to install radio sets in homes in time for the broadcast. The broadcast was an enormous success.

The Brunswick Hour of Music failed to attract as much media attention as Victor's programs. Talking Machine World reported monthly who performed on recent Victor programs—for example, it announced that the Eight Popular Victor Artists had been featured on Victor's sixth program, on March 12—but did not do the same for Brunswick. However, the new Brunswick Hour had a large audience of steady listeners. It regularly featured the Brunswick Symphony Orchestra conducted by Walter B. Rogers. Brunswick's "Hall of Fame" artists took turns performing for the weekly broadcasts.

Beginning in February 1925 Brunswick even sponsored a quiz program called "The Brunswick Hour Musical Memory Contest," the first of a line of programs created by the company to foster better appreciation for good music. Music memory contests did not originate with Brunswick. They were already popular in 1924, as evident by TMW devoting a long article to such contests in its September 1924 issue (it cites Beethoven's "Minuet in G" as the most used number, followed by MacDowell's "To A Wild Rose"). On Brunswick's program, \$5,000 was offered every month to listeners who could identify both the music and the performers. Brunswick dealers supplied contest blanks and contestants were urged to prepare by buying and listening to Brunswick records featuring "Hall of Fame" artists.

Brunswick took precautions so no artists would be recognized except by their voices during broadcasts. Artists would arrive at the studio in cars with drawn shades, and heavy cloth covered faces as they entered and left. Artists were kept in

separate rooms. The announcer was kept behind locked doors as he introduced unnamed artists. Orchestra members were not permitted to see the artists they accompanied. The program did not last long on the air, but before it ended one big winner was a young New York salesman, Robert Lanyon. He earned his \$5,000 by identifying a dozen different singers from five separate broadcasts.

Brunswick prospered in 1924. When the company in 1925 announced profits for the year 1924, it stressed that the new affiliation with RCA was important to its success. Page 135 of the April 1925 issue of Talking Machine World states, "The net income of the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Co. for 1924 was \$2,801,000, equivalent, after preferred dividends, to \$19.97 a share on the \$12,375,000 common stock outstanding the greater part of the year. This compares with \$2,513,000, or \$17.63 a share in 1923." As mentioned earlier, in March 1925 the company introduced to the market three new models of the Brunswick Radiola in upright designs—the 210, 212, and 217—but not all new Brunswick models of the mid-1920s came with radio, an example being the \$160 console model introduced as the "Eton" in March 1925.

That Brunswick was prosperous, eager to expand, and confident in the future was made clear to competitors when it purchased around this time the Vocalion record division of the Aeolian Company. Brunswick made the unusual announcement that Vocalion records would be issued by a company division that was independent of the division issuing the already established Brunswick series of records. The deal was announced to the trade on December 1, 1924 and it went into effect on January 2, 1925.

NEXT V78J: The Light Ray And Panatrobe Years

Ten Most Played 78s... - By Pete Whelan

1) **Otto Virgial: "Seven Year Itch"** (Bluebird 6279).

In trying to determine which of his four Bluebird sides I like best, I find myself playing "Seven Year Itch." It's spare, the most distilled, and the one where he reaches out, perhaps for the impossible or just to keep his head above water. You can hear what could be the struggle of a drowning man as he reaches shore. It has the same intensity, will, and luck.

2) **Charlie Patton: "A Spoonful Blues"** (Paramount 12869).

Talk about a "talking guitar." The hoarse-voiced Patton sings: "All I want is ah..." His sneaky guitar replies "Spoonful." Patton: "I'd kill a man for ah..." Guitar: "Spoonful." The little devil who hides in that guitar is Patton's cynical teenage companion: it insinuates oddities like "Sure, sure. Yeah, I'll bet. Uh huh." And, who knows, "Spoonful" might be the most infectious of Patton's great recorded repertoire.

3) **Charlie Patton: "Elder Greene Blues"** (Paramount 12972).

Thrilling, powerful and unapologetically archaic. Patton sings a delicious minor-key version of the 19th century blues "Don't You Leave Me Here." The vastly underrated Henry Sims accompanies Patton on the afterbeat with that scratchy, hacksaw back-porch violin. "Elder Greene" is a perfect example of the art of repetition: keep it simple and each time it gets a little hotter; each repetition becomes new but with a familiar shade. So does the next repetition. The end result isn't repetitious. It's not simple at all.

4) **William Harris: "Kansas City Blues"** (Gennett 6707).

This and "Bullfrog Blues" may be the best of his discovered sides. "Kansas City" is a faster-paced, tense version of Jim Jackson's Vocalion big-seller. William Harris has a tiger by the tail but he stays right on top in this breakneck version. He pushes himself ahead with his own fast guitar flailing out daring minor chords. It ends in perfect pas de deux.

5) **Bob Campbell: "Starvation Farm Blues"** (Vocalion 02798).

A voice just below falsetto, sinks, but it's still pitched up--held in anticipation by a double-timing guitar. It's gotta be 1932 or '33. Things aren't working out on the farm. Girl friend leaves in disgust, and that's always the last straw. With Spartan urgency, Campbell records Depression farm life. Bad times arrive suddenly, bad enough to flee to the North and work in an automotive factory--and live in a Detroit ghetto.

6) **Lovie Austin's Serenaders: "Galion Stomp"** (Paramount 12380).

Trumpet, trombone, and clarinet sway and dance so strangely, clump and bunch together, then break apart, disjointed. When you remove the back of a watch, the wheels turn in unison but at different speeds. Johnny Dodds' great clarinet weaves in and out, slips and dodges like a clever quarterback, and then finds its target--splat! Stop time! and loops in with a long smear. Maybe this is what the Buddy Bolden band was trying to do between 1902 and 1906, that first halting attempt--why those few years were remembered in New Orleans for so long.



Mama-I
I Heard You
Brought It
Right Back Home

Again
mama's
messin' 'round.
Papa's mad!
"TEXAS" ALEXANDER'S
got the low down on this story.

8542 (Mama, I Heard You Brought
10 in., It Right Back Home!
75¢) SABINE RIVER BLUES
Sung by Texas Alexander

RACE **Okeh** RECORDS
ELECTRIC



7) **Frank Stokes: "I'm Going Away Blues"** (Victor 23341). Summers in the South have always been eternal and weary. Now it's evening. Two older black men sit around a campfire in the 1880s. One has a guitar and begins to sing. The other picks up a fiddle. They seem perfectly and sorrowfully matched. We hear regret and remembrances from a distant era. Gone forever. The heartfelt times aren't coming back. These eyes blink. A tear? Why does this longing for the past keep pulling at us?

8) **Kid Bailey: "Mississippi Bottom Blues"** (Brunswick 7114). When the lights dim and the music begins, Kid Bailey (Willie Brown on 2nd guitar) aims up at the sky. His big voice sets itself on a tight string, coiled, unsprung, the drama held in. Two guitars never stop. They double-time seven notes each time and are relentless. He stays behind a fraction (there are momentary pauses). The tension never breaks or resolves itself or turns back upright. By the time the music stops, the singer is like a poised spear. The listener is left pointed ahead, still waiting at the end.

9) **Memphis Minnie: "Frankie Jean (That Trottin' Fool)"** (Vocalion 1588). Your horse wants to be free, breaks loose, and runs wild. What can a poor

girl do? Minnie's fast-talk explanation, her furious guitar, and Memphis Minnie herself are in headlong pursuit of Frankie Jean, the runaway horse. But like the love object in a withered affair, "She don't pay me no mind." Then Minnie stops and calls Frankie Jean with that distant, come-to-me whistle heard on Southern farms at sunset some 80 or 150 years ago.

10) **Garfield Akers: "Cottonfield Blues--Part II"** (Vocalion 1442). Art in agony could describe this. Akers' tale of suffering becomes almost uncontrolled. His tight vibrato wails like an East African wind instrument. At times the words get lost with sobbing not-quite-held-in-check. Things are almost out of control. Then come the two guitars. They set a relentless pace, come suddenly to a complete stop, then do a counter crossover.

Ten others are right up there too--ones by Skip James, Son House, Big Bill & Thomps, William Moore, Sam Collins, Freddie Keppard's Jazz Cardinals, Blind LeRoy Garnett, Robert Wilkins, Joe Callicott, Rudy Foster, Tommy Johnson. They could be my Ten Most Played 78s next year...

Pete Whelan is editor of 78 Quarterly.



Ten Favorite 78s -- *By Houston Maples*

1) **Charles Hackett: "Le Reve" from Manon** (Columbia 9034-M). Unlike most of Hackett's electrical Columbias, which are often strenuous in manner and dry in tone, this is sung almost entirely in a suave and faultless mezza voce, phrases beautifully turned, a memorable diminuendo on the final "Ah, Manon." In style and finish, this is close to the classic Edmund Clement version on Victor.

2) **Elsie Baker: "Spring Song of the Robin Woman" from Shanewis** (Victor 45495). Shanewis is an American Indian opera by Charles Wakefield Cadman that came and went in a few seasons at the Metropolitan Opera, providing a vehicle for contralto Sophie Braslau that Victor failed to exploit. But the company did give us this lively version sung by its house contralto. Baker is in fine fettle narrating the arrival of the Robin Woman, whose ceremonial song brings an end to winter. Curiously, the published take is number 14. One suspects there were technical rather than artistic problems at the session since Baker negotiates the song's intricacies with aplomb and ringing tone. Baker told the late Phil Miller that she considered this her finest.

3) **Lucy Isabelle Marsh: "Italian Street Song" from Naughty Marietta** (Victor 9145 in Album C-1). Marsh's early and justly popular version of "Italian Street Song" on purple label Victor 60031 was once to be found in many a parlor Victrola. Victor Herbert may be out of fashion these days, but this number in the original arrangement with chorus and soaring soprano solo is still irresistible. The excitement generated when the return of the refrain is crowned by Marsh's beautifully taken high C is much more palpable in this later electrical recording. It is part of a memorial album made a few years after Herbert's death. A best seller into the late 1930s, after which it was deemed technically dated and replaced with Album C-33, late RCA copies with quiet surfaces are remarkably vivid.

4) **Olive Kline and Elsie Baker: "I Know A Bank Whereon The Wild Thyme Blows"** (Victor 4085). This is a welcome relief from the parlor ballads, mammy lullabies, and hymns that these singers were too often obliged to sing in their duet recordings. Their response to Horn's light-hearted setting of Shakespeare is musically fleet and charming. The unison passages are nicely balanced, embellishments and trills tossed off with assurance.

5) **George Hamlin: Siciliana from Cavalleria Rusticana** (Victor 64387). Hamlin's tone was warm and appealing, his manner patrician. He always sang within his means. These may not be the first qualities one looks for in this passionate Italian serenade, but Hamlin's singing is refreshingly buoyant and alive, the voice moving with an easy flow. Rather too gentlemanly for a Turiddu, perhaps, but this is ingratiating singing.



NOTE FROM V78J's EDITOR: The Encyclopedia of Popular American Recording Pioneers: 1895-1925 has grown recently. Thanks to Houston Maples' help, entries for Lucy Isabelle Marsh, Elsie Baker, Lambert Murphy, Olive Kline and similar singers are now very detailed!

6) **Grace Kerns: "Rose Softly Blooming"** (Vocalion B14495). Kerns was Columbia's house soprano in various solo, duet and anonymous ensemble recordings. Yet one approaches her Columbias with trepidation. Often the recording is poor, the manner pedestrian, the lower notes uncomfortable. Kerns moved on to such labels as National Music Lovers and Vocalion, which more successfully captured the transparent purity of her upper register. Her sweet tone and musicality are well displayed in the long lines of Spohr's melody (mislabelled as a ballad by "Ball"). The embellishments and soaring cadenza at the end are managed with a seemingly unaffected and instinctive grace.

7) **Emilio DeGogorza: "Voici que le printemps"** (IRCC 72-B). DeGogorza recorded such a variety of music over so many years that we should not be surprised to find him essaying an evanescent Debussy song right along with "The Clang of the Forge" or "Juanita." He sings it supremely well, in this 1928 recording, with mature artistry and untarnished voice, further proof of his amazing versatility and all-encompassing musicianship. Victor must have decided this was too good for the average man. The IRCC rescued it from the vaults.

8) **Alma Gluck: "Song of India" from Sadko** (Victrola 64269--2nd take). Rimsky-Korsakov wrote this as a tenor aria but that has not stopped sopranos from Gluck to Case and Kurenko from appropriating it, to say nothing of Paul Whiteman and Tommy Dorsey. Two takes were issued and therein lies a magical difference. The first includes the orchestral introduction and moves at a brisk pace which finds Gluck conscientious but somewhat disengaged. What artistic decisions were made between this take and the second, we'll never know, but in Take 2 the introduction is abridged, allowing for a slower tempo. Gluck responds with inspired singing, sensitive to all nuances and dynamics of this exotic piece, faultlessly projected, with an almost instrumental control of vocal color and placement. What a lesson in the difference between good and great singing!



The last item on Maples' list is an early John Charles Thomas recording. Here is a later one with the singer's signature almost legible.

9) **Elizabeth and William Wheeler: "Serenade"** (Victor 17423). Usually appropriated by sopranos, Tosti's "La Serenata" has been sung with and without embellishments by every prima donna from Patti to Ponselle. I do not know if Tosti was responsible for this elaborate duet arrangement but it is a perfect vehicle for the Wheelers, who seem to delight in both the melody and its variations, which are sung in nimble counterpoint. Both sing with warm and lucid tone. The musical effect is wonderfully spontaneous.

10) **John Charles Thomas: "Little Girls, Goodbye" from Apple Blossoms** (Aeolian-Vocalion 20001). A souvenir of Thomas' early years on Broadway, this shows all the prodigious voice and irrepressible vitality that we know from his later records. The number, composed by Victor Jacobi, is lively and funny even if it does recall similar sentiments (and tunes) from Lehár's earlier Merry Widow. When Thomas introduced this in the theater in 1919 (the record is from 1920), it must have been a show-stopper.

Ten Favorite 78s -- *By Howard Sanner*

I often see questions on the Internet about the value of a particular record. Usually the answer is "not very much," but I always add that there's generally a reason why records sold well and that when I think of the records in my collection that I most enjoy, major rarities do not come to mind. To test the truth of this, I made this list of 78s, none of which would have three-figure minimum bids on dealers' auction lists. Record numbers given are issue numbers in the original country, U.S. or British issue numbers (whichever is not the original country), and, in some cases, LP or CD issue numbers. This article is not intended to give the full discographic history of each entry; for other issues, consult discographies of the singers or standard discographic reference works.

1. **Alnæs. "Lykken mellem to mennesker."** Kirsten Flagstad, soprano; Eyvind Alnæs, piano. HMV AL 2265, X-2974, AGSA 34; CD Simax PSC 1821. Matrix BN 191-2, recorded 19 Jan 29.

2. **Weber. Oberon: "Ozean! du Ungeheuer."** Kirsten Flagstad, soprano; Philadelphia Orchestra; Eugene Ormandy, cond. Victor 15244; HMV DB 3440; CD Simax PSC 1821, Romophone 81023-2. Matrices CS 013077-2A and CS 013078-1, recorded 17 Oct 37 in the Academy of Music, Philadelphia, with an orchestra of 65, 2:15-4:15 p.m. EST.

I spent five years of my life compiling the Flagstad discography that eventually became my thesis. Thus her appearance twice on this list should be no surprise. The Alnæs song was recorded the same year as her first public performance of Elsa in Lohengrin, a role she learned at age twelve, and three years before her first Isolde. It shows a silvery lyric soprano voice, not small, but lacking the size evident in her later records. Her simplicity and communicativeness give the lie to claims that she could not put across a song, and the dynamic range from forte to floated pianissimo shows her a thorough mistress

of her instrument. The Oberon aria, recorded some two and a half years after her spectacular Met debut, finds her in her prime, performing with a great orchestra and conductor, in one of the world's great halls, captured in state of the art sound for its day. None of her records made on other occasions have all of these qualities. In his notes to Rococo LP 5380 (reprinted in Simax CD PSC 1821), Arne Dorumsgaard tells of his love for the way Flagstad sang the opening of this piece, and I fully agree. The firm attack on the initial E-flat, with a perfectly-controlled diminuendo as she moves to the same note an octave lower, sets the mood. The end of the aria is equally impressive, with her huge voice sailing through the coloratura and trilling with ease. The very end should lay to rest forever the notion that Flagstad did not have a good high C--and, unlike some famous sopranos, she does not omit the phrase before the top C or even pause for breath before singing it.

3. **Verdi. Ernani: "Sorta e la notte...Ernani involami."** Ina Souez, soprano; Alberto Erede, cond. Victor 14493; Japanese Victor JD 1288; LP Orion ORS 7293. Matrices 2EA 4018-1 and 2EA 4019-1, recorded 9 Jul 36, Abbey Road Studio, London.

I bought this record in a thrift shop decades ago. When I first heard it, I was blown away. First, unlike even the LP versions I have heard, it is uncut. That and Souez's phrasing and subtle rubato make this, for me, the version to which all others are compared--and, so far, found wanting.

4. **Falla. La vida breve: "Vivan los que ríen!" and "Allí está riyendo."** Victoria de los Angeles, soprano; Philharmonia Orchestra; Stanford Robinson, cond. HMV DB 6702. Matrices 2EA 12817-1 and 2EA 12818-1, recorded 14 Mar 48, Abbey Road Studio, London.

I remember one of my professors in college telling me that his wife, who has even less

respect for singers in general than I do, had been impressed by this record. Thus, when I found a copy a few years later, I was especially excited. In a nutshell, she was absolutely right. De los Angeles's flawless intonation, creamy, luscious, smoked-glass sound, and passionate delivery are worthy of any musician's respect—or envy. I have been known to declare these the two greatest vocal recordings ever made. Then I say to myself that surely this praise is too extravagant and try to think of other candidates. So far, I have failed.

5. Puccini. Turandot: "Nessun dorma!" Beniamino Gigli, tenor; Philharmonia Orchestra; Stanford Robinson, cond. HMV DB 21138; Victor 10-3761 (dubbing). Matrix 2EA 14232-1, recorded 4 Oct 49.

Gigli was 59 when he recorded this aria, and still had the golden sound, good intonation, and breath control for which he had been renowned. It sounds as though he could still be holding that high B at the end! It is said that Puccini wrote Calaf's music with Gigli's voice in mind, and, thanks to this record, we understand why. I could live without the Technicolor, Hollywood ending, involving only the chorus and orchestra, that HMV saw fit to graft onto it, though.

6. Rachmaninoff. "To the Children." Nora Hopper; Old Irish air; arr. C. Milligan Fox. "By the Shortcut to the Rosses." John McCormack, tenor; Edwin Schneider, piano. Victor 1288; HMV DA 1112, IR 368 (Rachmaninoff) and Victor 1528; HMV DA 1234, IR 210 (Old Irish Air). Matrices BVE 27085-4 and BVE 41546-2, recorded 17 Dec 25 and 13 Jan 28. 75.00 and 77.43 rpm. (Note: BVE 41546-1 was issued on Victor 10-0041 in set DM 1358.)

McCormack has been a favorite of mine since I first heard his peerless recording of "Il mio tesoro" at about age thirteen. These two recordings, a doubling that never existed in real life but that should have (my thanks to V78) for indulging this!), are as different as two songs can be. I almost always play them back to back. The

Rachmaninoff distills every bit of the love and worry and hope all parents have for their children. McCormack expresses these feelings in a way that would move a block of granite; no matter how many times I hear this disc, I am invariably emotionally drained by its end. "By the Shortcut to the Rosses" is a lighthearted trifle, the sort of encore piece that McCormack's alchemy could transform into a masterwork. It proves the perfect antidote to the Rachmaninoff. Note particularly McCormack's use of an Irish accent here, absent in "To the Children," and his attention to diction: the last word, "land," is sung on one of those soft notes for which McCormack held the patent, and he articulates the final two consonants clearly.

7. Thomas. Le caïd: "Enfin chérie" (Air du tambour-major). Pol Plançon, bass; with orchestra. Victor 88034, 18143; G&T 032033. Matrix C 3030-2, recorded 14 Mar 06. 76.60 rpm.

Neither Plançon nor this infectious aria need much discussion. Though he is often painfully sharp, he also negotiates the scales and trills with an easy grace, élan, and elegance impossible to fault.



8. **Charpentier. Louise:** "Depuis le jour." Bizet. **Carmen:** "Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante." Eleanor Steber, soprano; Philharmonia Orchestra; Walter Susskind, cond. HMV DB 6514; Victor 12-0690. Matrices 2EA 12298-2 and 2EA 12299-2.

Watching The Voice of Firestone was a weekly ritual in the Sanner household when I was growing up. Steber appeared frequently, so I got to know her at an early age. For my money, she is the great American soprano (and no, I do not mean just of the post-WWII era). Hers are my favorite renditions of these arias, thanks to her excellent intonation and control, and her sensitive, passionate, almost sexy delivery. Listening to Steber, I cannot imagine what Don José saw in that other girl. I suspect, but do not know for sure, that Dennis Brain plays the horn part in the Carmen aria. Whoever it is does a superb job. (My major instrument was French horn.)

9. **Delibes. Lakmé:** "Dov'è l'indiana bruna." Amelita Galli-Curci, soprano; with orchestra. Victor 74510, 6132; G&T 2-053130, DB 263. Matrix C 18595-10, recorded 5 Mar 17. 78.2 rpm. (W.R. Moran suggests 76.60 rpm.)

Roberta Peters was another frequent guest on The Voice of Firestone. I remember hearing her sing the Bell Song, and I loved it. So it is no wonder, when I started to collect records, that I wanted to hear how the legendary Galli-Curci did it. On this disc Galli-Curci displays all of her many good qualities and avoids most of her bad ones, especially the unreliable intonation that increasingly plagued her as time passed. Her youthful sweetness of tone and razor sharp coloratura, along with that certain something called "it" that distinguishes the great from the good make her my favorite coloratura soprano.

10. **Donizetti. Lucia:** "Chi mi frena in tal momento?" (Sextet). Amelita Galli-Curci (soprano), Minnie Egner (contralto), Enrico Caruso (tenor), Angelo Bada (tenor), Giuseppe de Luca (baritone), Marcel Journet (bass). Verdi.



Rigoletto: "Bella figlia dell'amore" (Quartet). Amelita Galli-Curci (soprano), Flora Perini (contralto), Enrico Caruso (tenor), Giuseppe de Luca (baritone). Both with orchestra; Joseph Pasternack, cond. Victor 95212 (Lucia), 95100 (Rigoletto), 10000 (both); HMV 2-054067 (Lucia), 2-054066 (Rigoletto). Matrices C 19133-2 and C 19132-2, recorded 25 Jan 17. 76.00 rpm.

This is the disc that started it all. Dad bought a copy of Victor 10000 before I was born, and when I was a good boy growing up, I got to play it. I loved the pieces and the performances both then and now; my (i.e., dad's) copy has been played to death and is practically worn out. Nevertheless, whenever I plop it on the turntable, a multitude of memories flood back. It is directly owing to this record that I became a record collector, decided to study music professionally, compiled a discography, and even wrote this article. It has had an incalculable influence on my life and has much to answer for.

Howard Sanner lives in Bladensburg, Maryland.

The Emerson Phonograph Company

by Allan Sutton

"The Emerson Record is not a mere commercial article placed upon a market which does not need it. Emerson Records are a distinct innovation, a necessity...." — Emerson record catalog, 1917

After two decades as recording manager for the Columbia Graphophone Company, Victor Emerson announced formation of his Emerson Phonograph Company, Inc., in May 1915.

As a co-developer of Columbia's 10¢ Little Wonder disc, Emerson had witnessed the strong demand for a cheap but well-made record, and his initial production consisted of inexpensive 6-inch sapphire-ball vertical-cut and 6-inch and 7-inch universal-cut discs.

The Pathé Connection

The most unusual of the early Emerson series were the 6-inch vertically cut discs. Priced at 25¢ and intended for play on Pathé and other sapphire-ball machines, these single-sided discs were dubbed from European Pathé cylinder masters under license from the Pathé Frères Phonograph Company. Among the featured artists were Enrico Caruso (in a dubbing from a 1903 Anglo-Italian Commerce Company cylinder), Florencio Constantino, Harry Lauder, and other stars of Pathé's European catalog, many of whom were under contract to competing companies in the United States. The series was withdrawn after several months, probably under pressure from Victor. "We have discontinued the manufacture of this type of record and are now concentrating on the Emerson universal-cut discs," Emerson announced in August 1916. "We will dispose of any or part of this lot, minimum quantity of 1,000, at 4¢ each."

Emerson and the Universal Cut

With the Pathé connection severed, Victor Emerson concentrated on his own recordings utilizing the universal cut. Although Emerson often claimed credit for inventing the universal cut, the process was actually invented by 1899 by George T. Smallwood, who assigned the patent (#639,452) to Emerson in 1915. The universal groove was modulated on a 45-degree bias and could be played, usually with mediocre results, with a lateral or vertical reproducer. Its most important asset, however, lay in its apparent skirting of the basic patents on lateral recording.

Emerson initially offered 6-inch single-sided and 7-inch double-sided discs (the latter priced at 25¢ each, or 30¢ each on the West Coast), but it discontinued the 6-inch series after approximately 200 issues. The company also took the unprecedented step of adding promotional blurbs to some of its labels, a practice it later discontinued.

An Emerson advertisement in the *Talking Machine World* for August 1916 unveiled a new marketing ploy: "3 Weeks From Broadway to Your Store...While other manufacturers take *months* to release a new number—we take *weeks*. Broadway's stamp of approval is our cue to act." A later ad, which compared Emerson's release dates to those of its two largest competitors (presumably Victor and Columbia) showed Emerson's releases of selected hits to be one to five months in advance of the competition. The strategy apparently paid off,

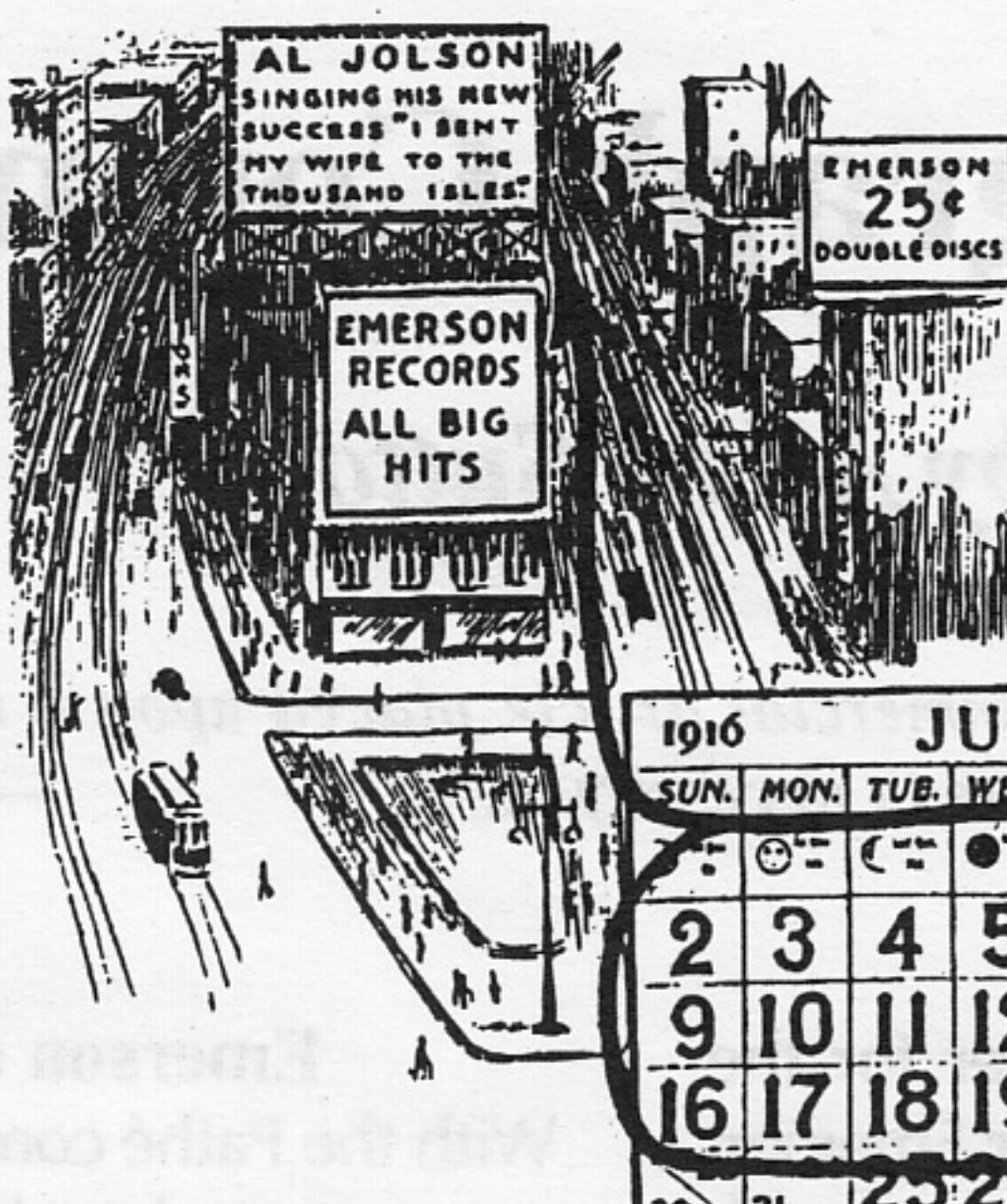
since Emerson's 1917 catalog claimed a monthly output of over 1.25 million 7-inch discs.

Emerson introduced 9-inch (65¢) discs in January 1918, followed by 10-inch (75¢) discs in June 1919. The larger size was initially reserved for dance selections, standard instrumental music, and religious material, with current vocal hits and some ethnic material still issued on the cheaper 9-inch series during the first half of 1919. The policy was changed in September 1919, when the 9-inch series was discontinued entirely in favor of standard 10-inch pressings for all categories.

Twelve-inch discs were introduced in November 1919, although relatively few were produced. At about the same time, Emerson quietly abandoned the universal cut in favor of the standard lateral cut.

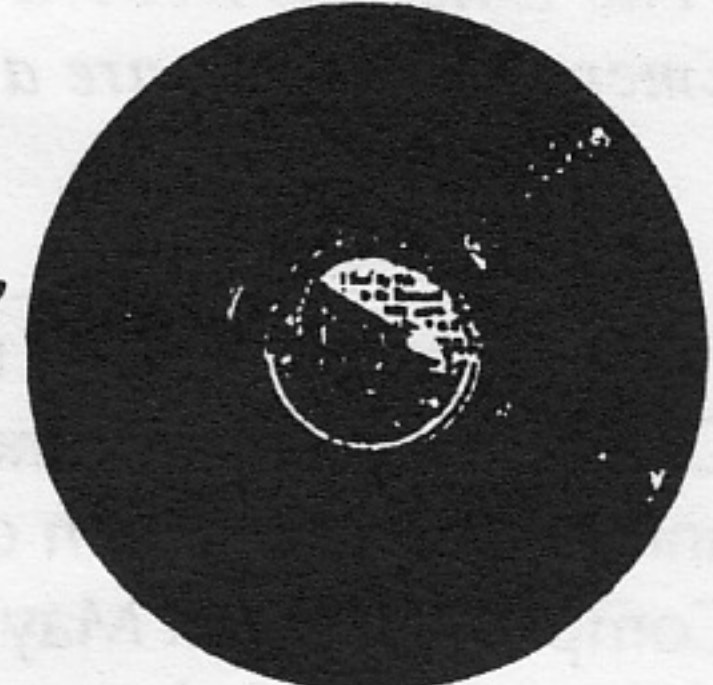
Emerson's familiar shield label design and treble clef trademark first appeared in June 1918 on 9-inch and 10-inch discs, which were inexplicably marketed as Emerson Gold Seal records although the label color was actually blue (9-inch) or black (10-inch).

The company discontinued 7-inch and 9-inch Emerson discs at the end of 1919 but continued to issue 7-inch discs under the Melodisc. Introduced in February 1920, Melodisc continued Emerson's 21000 master numbering series, and titles on late releases confirm that new 7-inch masters were recorded as late as 1921.



3 Weeks From Broadway To Your Store.

1916		JULY							1916
SUN.	MON.	TUE.	WED.	THU.	FRI.	SAT.			
							1		
2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15			
16	17	18	19	20	21	22			
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	



Three weeks after Al Jolson first sang, "I Sent My Wife To The Thousand Isles"—an Emerson Record of the song was on the shelves of our dealers.

This is an excellent example of the efficiency and promptness of Emerson recording. While other manufacturers take *months* to release a new number—we take *weeks*. Broadway's stamp of approval is our cue to act. Immediate service is one of the many exclusive Emerson features.

Emerson 25c Double Discs

An Emerson advertisement from August, 1916. Note the subtle implication that Al Jolson—then under contract to Columbia—made the Emerson recording.

Emerson's Heyday

By 1919, Emerson was a well-established company under the management of an experienced staff, which had been recruited largely from established record companies and included H.T. Leeming (vice president and general manager), Harry Marker (chief recording engineer), and Hugo Riesenfeld and Arthur Bergh (musical directors). Although Emerson maintained its own studios, pressing was contracted to the Scranton Button Company (Scranton, Pennsylvania), a thermoplastics manufacturer that had begun to make a name for itself as an independent record-pressing plant. Labels were printed by the Keystone Printed Specialties

Company (Scranton), and phonograph cabinets were built by the Udell Works (Indianapolis), a prominent furniture manufacturer. Except within the New York metropolitan area, sales and distribution were handled by a network of regional jobbers.

From the start, Victor Emerson acquired major talent for his label. During his stay at Columbia, Emerson had the opportunity to meet many stars, and he lost little time in recruiting Irene Franklin, Gene Greene, Van & Schenck, Nat M. Wills, Louis Mann, and other popular actors and vaudevillians for his 7-inch series. In February 1919 the company signed the Louisiana Five, a pioneering white jazz group, and in October of that year took a full-page *TMW* ad to announce that Arthur Fields and Irving and Jack Kaufman had signed exclusive contracts. "If you are handling Emerson record," the copy writer crowed, "a new cash register of two should now be in order." By 1921 Emerson could boast of exclusive contracts with the Six Brown Brothers, Eddie Cantor, and the team of Noble Sissle & Eubie Blake.

Classics and the Foreign Division

Although Emerson's unhappy experience with the illicit Caruso issues probably showed him the folly of trying to compete with Victor's Red Seals, it didn't keep him from producing a modest classical and operatic series featuring Eva Leoni, Max Bloch, Carlo Ferretti, Menotti Frasca, and Mana Zucca. Emerson, however, preferred to focus on the popular market. "Mr. Average Man knows what he likes, and so do we," claimed a 1920 ad. "You know...how fast the 'hit' records waltz off your shelves. They're always waving goodbye to the more dignified records." In early 1921 the company cut its classical material to the 85¢ pop level. Eventually much of it was reissued pseudonymously on National Music Lovers, Grey Gull, and other cut-rate brands.

In September 1918, Emerson announced its creation of an international record department devoted to ethnic and foreign-language recordings, under the direction of Louis D. Rosenfield. "The

foreigner buys big all the time," Emerson International exhorted in a July 1919 *TMW* ad. "Get his business." A month later, Emerson International advertised that its Polish, Italian, Hebrew-Jewish, Czecho-Slovak, Russian-Ruthenian, and Spanish-Mexican-Cuban catalogs were ready for distribution and announced a move to larger quarters due to "the demand for Emerson International records which has caused the factory to be running day and night."

Emerson entered the custom label market in 1919, producing Medallion for the Baldwin Piano Company of Cincinnati and Symphonola for the Larkin Company of Buffalo, New York. Both labels, which drew on Emerson masters, vanished during the economic slump of 1921-1922.

The Boom Years

The Emerson Phonograph Company was expanding at a dizzying pace, and the pages of the *Talking Machine World* for 1919 and 1920 are full of news of new Emerson jobbers and artist signings.

In June 1919 the company launched a trade magazine, *The Emersonian*, and in February 1920 it opened new studios and offices at 206 Fifth Avenue and announced plans—probably never realized—to open a studio and factory in Los Angeles. In the following September Emerson unveiled a lavishly furnished showroom and auditorium at its Fifth Avenue headquarters. "A decidedly Parisian atmosphere is evident," *TMW* noted. A new line of Emerson phonographs incorporating (in an obvious bow to the Starr Piano Company) the all-spruce Music Master horn was introduced with considerable fanfare in August 1920.

In the same year, Emerson became involved with a branch pressing plant in Atlanta. The Southern States Phonograph Company, founded by A.H. Carlisle (who, not coincidentally, was also president of Emerson's Talking Book Corporation) pressed Emerson and Talking Book discs for a short time.

Emerson in Receivership

Its apparent success notwithstanding, the Emerson Phonograph Company's bubble was about to burst

in late 1920. Overexpansion, lower-than-expected sales, and an unhealthy level of debt forced the Emerson organization—actually two closely related entities incorporated in New York and Delaware—into receivership on December 10, 1920.

The trouble began when one Mary S. Johnson filed a \$16,686 claim against Emerson for printing and advertising materials. That such a small claim could force a major corporation into receivership exposed a basic weakness in Emerson's operations. "The company," the *Talking Machine World* reported, "is alleged to be unable to meet maturing obligations."

Other problems loomed, too. In June 1921 the *Talking Machine World* announced that the entire contents of the Southern States Phonograph Company plant, Emerson's southern pressing and distribution facility, were for sale by the Dixie Paper & Box Company of Atlanta, which offered to "ship anywhere."

Emerson and the Regal Record Company Subsidiary

Financially shaken, Emerson reentered the affordable record market with the creation of its Regal Record Company division in early 1921. Under the management of H.T. Leeming, Regal produced a good-quality 50¢ record at a time when the average 10-inch popular release sold for 85¢.

Emerson filed a trademark application for the Regal brand on March 22, 1921, claiming use on records since February 1 of that year. Although the company did not publicly acknowledge its connection to Regal, the label initially was purely an Emerson product and drew on the same material used for full-priced Emerson releases.

Pseudonyms masked artists on many Regal issues: Noble Sissle was disguised as "Leonard Graham," Eubie Blake as "Robert Black," and Fred Hillebrand as "Charles Foster." The Original Memphis Five appeared as "The Kentucky Serenaders," and the seminal California Ramblers employed their usual "Golden Gate Orchestra" identity. Despite its lack of recognizable talent, the Regal brand was an immediate success.

Victor Emerson Bows Out

By May 1921, buoyed by the success of the new Regal operation, Leeming could declare to the *Talking Machine World*, "Like other manufacturers, we have had our troubles due to overproduction and the consumers' decision to await the advent of lower prices. However, we took our loss, have gone after business vigorously, and the combination has put us back on our feet."

Jumping belatedly on the blues bandwagon in April 1921, Emerson signed Lillyan Brown, a headliner on the Keith vaudeville circuit as one-half of the team of Brown & DeMont, but Brown's efforts did little to increase sales.

By early 1922, Victor Emerson's empire—the two parent corporations, the Regal subsidiary, an independent pressing plant, an export corporation, the Talking Book Corporation, several client labels, and a far-flung network of suppliers and jobbers—had become fragmented and inefficient. Financial problems continued to plague the company, and production of Emerson records was suspended in May 1922.

The Abrams Takeover

On June 1, 1922, the Emerson and Regal trademarks and all Emerson assets except accounts receivable were sold to Benjamin Abrams (formerly of the James Manoil Company, manufacturers of the Manophone) for \$50,000. Rudolph Kanarek (formerly of the Independent German-American Talking Machine Company and probably also involved with the Lyrphone Company of America) was appointed treasurer of the reorganized Emerson Phonograph Company, which was incorporated in August 1922. Charles Hasin was recruited as recording manager.

Emerson's Regal subsidiary was sold to the Scranton Button Company, in the process severing Regal's supply of Emerson masters. Relocated to 20 West Twentieth Street, New York, the newly independent Regal Record Company at first drew on Paramount masters from the New York Recording Laboratories, which had begun to develop a lucrative trade as a master supplier to minor labels.

Emerson Race Records

Now 50 CENTS formerly 75

Who but EMERSON can Put Out these wonderful blue hits and who but these wonderful EMERSON Artists can Put Them Over.....

singing smooth, smothering tunes of blues and jazz that make you smile and sway as you're carried away—back to sunny cottonfields as charming little Lena Wilson moans her magic melodies—or as the 'hot stuff' of Fletcher Henderson's blooey, blues gets you goin' like Bright Broadway's Steppin' Fools.

Fletcher Henderson and His Orchestra
He and His Club Alabam Orchestra, nightly performers on Broadway in a wierd, wild mixture of jazz and soothing symphony.

Lena Wilson Ethel Finney
10744 Chatsanooga Blues, Fox Trot
Ghost of the Blues, Fox Trot

Rosa Henderson Hazel Meyers
10745 I Don't Love Nobody, so I don't have no blues.
Blues Character Song
10746 Heart Breaking Jan, Blues Character Song
10747 I'm Gonna Tell Your Playhouse Down.
Character Blues Song
10748 It Ain't Gonna Rain No Mo' Novelty Solo, Ukulele Acc. Sterling Grant
10749 My Papa Dooan't Two-Tone No Time. Blues Fox Trot.
Original Memphis Five
10750 Oh! Sister Ain't That Hot. Fox Trot.
Fletcher Henderson & Orchestra
10751 Mamma's Gonna Slow You Down. Bud Cooper Fox Trot.
Fletcher Henderson & Orchestra

DEALERS— If you do not carry EMERSON records write for agency rights in your city and complete catalog of Emerson popular hits, standard classics, Jewish, Italian, German, Polish and latest Race records.

Emerson Phonograph Co.
307-309 SIXTH AVE NEW YORK CITY

OVER ONE HUNDRED MILLION EMERSON RECORDS HAVE BEEN SOLD

fices were moved to 105-111 W. 20th Street. Pressing was consolidated at the Scranton Button Company. The Udell Works, no longer under contract, dumped its surplus Emerson phonographs on the market at discount prices, and a new machine contract was awarded to the Wasmuth-Goodrich Company of Peru, Indiana. In a particularly jarring move, recording of current popular material was suspended from June through August 1922, although the company continued to issue standard and light classical material from its existing catalog.

When the production of Emerson pop resumed in September 1922, the records were priced at a standard 75¢. But in August 1923 came a radically redesigned label—The New Emerson—and a price reduction to 50¢ that probably reflected the increasing involvement of Scranton, which specialized in inexpensive brands. Emerson scoured its backlist and re-issued many of its older masters, usually in different couplings and under new catalog numbers.

A 50¢ race record series, announced in May 1924 and featuring Lena Wilson, Ethel Finney, Hazel Myers, Rosa Henderson, Cecil Grant, and the Fletcher Henderson Orchestra, proved to be short-lived.

Emerson announced its short-lived Race Record series in the *Chicago Defender* for May 10, 1924.

By late 1922 or early 1923, however, Regal was contracting its recording to the Independent Recording Laboratories, an independent studio that had also produced some later Arto masters. In time, Regal would absorb Independent entirely as its own studio.

Regal went on to become the flagship label in a group of inexpensive brands manufactured by the Scranton Button Company and marketed by the Plaza Music Company of New York.

Under Abrams' management, changes came quickly to the Emerson organization. The Chicago offices were closed, and Emerson's New York of-

Emerson's Dime-Store Labels

In January 1924 Abrams created a new division, the Emerson Recording Laboratories, Inc., to supply masters to various minor labels, including Clover, Dandy, the Grey Gull group, and the Bridgeport Die & Machine Company group. The original Emerson master numbering series (by then in the 42000s) was maintained for material intended for release on the parent label, but ERL initiated a separate master series, starting at 3100 and eventually reaching the 3900s, for material intended for issue on its client labels. Inevitably there was overlap, and a single master might be assigned dual numbers; the Original Memphis Five's recording of *Sioux City Sue*, for example, appeared as mx. 42567

on the Emerson label and as mx. 3142 on the BD&M label group, although the recordings are identical. ERL maintained this dual system until mid-1925 and in the process created a tangle that discographers are still attempting to unravel.

Grey Gull Records, Inc., the Boston-based producer of a line of notoriously cheap labels, became ERL's major customer. After several years of producing its own premium-priced discs with little success, Grey Gull slashed prices and quality in 1922 and began to draw on a hodgepodge of material from various sources, including Emerson, the New York Recording Laboratories (Paramount), and the Regal Record Company (Banner/Regal). In early 1924 Grey Gull finally settled on a ERL as its primary supplier, and for several years the company drew almost exclusively masters recorded for it by Emerson and numbered in ERL's new 3100-3900-master series.

Grey Gull probably maintained some semblance of an independent artist and repertoire department; most of the ERL masters produced for Grey Gull seem to have been recorded specifically for that company. Although there was occasional master trading between Grey Gull, Emerson, and related labels, the practice seems to have been far less common than might be expected. However, some Emerson material recorded as early as 1919, including several Cal Stewart sides released under the pseudonym "Duncan Jones," also occasionally turned up on Grey Gull and related labels—Amco, Radiex, Globe, Nadsco, Supertone, and Supreme, among others—from 1924 through mid-1926.

The Bridgeport Die & Machine Company, a Connecticut-based independent pressing plant previously affiliated with the New York Recording Laboratories, also became an Emerson customer in 1924. BD&M—manufacturer of Carnival, Hudson, Lyraphone, Master Tone, Mitchell, Music Box, Pennington, Puretone, Puritan, Ross Stores, and Triangle, and Up-to-Date, among others—had relied almost exclusively on NYRL's Paramount masters in 1922 and 1923. It is not clear why the BD&M-NYRL affiliation was severed, but by mid-1924 the BD&M labels were obtaining a large number of their masters from ERL's

client-label series and continued to do so until BD&M suspended operations in July 1925.

ERL masters appeared on a handful of other minor brands, including Bell, Clover, Dandy, The Electric (which, despite its name, was acoustically recorded), Everybody's, Lenox, National, and Silvertone (2400 and 3000 series). The Scranton-Regal group of dime store labels—Banner, Domino, Oriole, Regal, etc.—also occasionally used ERL material but usually re-numbered it to fit within its own master sequence.

Record and Radio Division Split

In November 1924, Emerson's record division was split from its more successful radio division, and rights to manufacture Emerson records were sold to the Scranton Button Company. The newly formed Emerson Phonograph & Radio Corporation (ancestor of the present-day Emerson corporation) served only as distributor for the records and was not directly involved in their production.

The Emerson Recording Laboratories became a recording division within the Scranton organization, which seems to have discontinued the New Emerson label in early-to-mid 1925. No new records would appear under an Emerson label for the remainder of 1925, and the dual master numbering system was finally abandoned with the discontinuance of the original Emerson series. ERL found itself limited primarily to producing custom and personal recordings and supplying material to Grey Gull and other minor brands.

The Emerson Revival

Possibly sensing trouble ahead, a group of ERL executives incorporated the Consolidated Recording Corporation in 1925. The *Talking Machine World* briefly noted its creation, but nothing more was heard of the company until early 1926, when Consolidated revived the Emerson label. The event seems to have marked the end of Scranton's control of the Emerson brand, although Scranton may have continued to press the discs.

Consolidated revived Emerson's original shield label design and treble clef trademark, but the Em-

erson record that was announced to the trade in April 1926 was a far cry from its predecessor. It was an undistinguished and cheaply produced brand that wholesaled for as little as 20¢ per record and retailed at three for \$1.

The Emerson Electrasonic, introduced in mid-1926, was indeed electrically recorded, albeit crudely. There is some circumstantial evidence that the recordings were made by Grey Gull, which opened its own electrically equipped studio in June 1926. In addition to the new electric sides, Consolidated issued a few acoustically recorded Pathé masters (including some of the hotter Joe Candullo sides) and older Emerson masters on early Electrasonic issues. Electric Emerson masters were also issued under the W.T. Grant Company's Bell label through mid-1927, before production of that brand was turned over to the Starr Piano Company. Emerson sales appear to have been poor, however, and the last known Emerson records were released in June 1927.

Consolidated's Post-Emerson Labels

Consolidated introduced at least two labels—Popular Hit and Marathon—after discontinuing the Emerson label. Popular Hit was introduced in mid-1927, coinciding with the end of the Emerson label, and it continued ERL's 31000-series masters. Marathon, a rare 7-inch brand marketed by the Nutmeg Record Corporation (an early ERL customer that had previously marketed the Clover and Sterling labels) was introduced in November, 1927, according to Nutmeg's trademark application. Touted as "marvelous musical miniatures," Marathon records were patterned on the inexpensive small-diameter discs that became a fad in Great Britain in the later 1920s. The discs, which employed a finer and more closely pitched groove than standard 78s, claimed to offer up to three minutes of playing time on a 7-inch pressing. Marathon masters were also numbered in ERL's 31000 series, but too few specimens have been located to determine whether these were original recordings or dubbings from existing 10-inch masters. A single-sided Marathon personal recording is known.

Popular Hit and Marathon appear to have been

the last labels produced by Consolidated. Marathon survived into the early months of 1929, the last link to Victor Emerson's once-great empire.

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The many sides of Victor Emerson

by Allan Sutton



verdict was overturned on appeal in 1918, but by then the "little record" fad was losing momentum. Waterson had already divested himself of Little Wonder, and Emerson was phasing out his own small-diameter line.

Emerson and the United States Record Manufacturing Corporation

Beginning in 1920, Victor Emerson became increasingly involved with ancillary businesses. In April of that year he incorporated the United States Record Manufacturing Corporation (Pierce Street, Long Island City, New York) "for the manufacture of records and other thermoplastic materials." The plant began full production during the autumn of 1921 and, in addition to pressing Emerson and Regal discs, produced several rare and short-lived brands, including Apollo, Emerald, Hits, and Rialto (the latter unrelated to the later Marsh Laboratories brand). The Emerson connection is clearly seen in the use of USRMC's Rialto label design for the later Dandy label, an Emerson Recording Laboratories product.

Emerson's Picture Records

Another Emerson enterprise was the Talking Book Corporation (358 Fifth Avenue, New York), which produced semiflexible, small-diameter children's records laminated to colorful die-cut figures. First announced in the *Talking Machine World* for May 15, 1919, Talking Books were manufactured by a process patented by Emerson (#1,399,757). According to *TMW*, "elocutionists of note and merit make these talking records, so that the child's ear is attuned to perfection of sound from infancy...." Unfortunately, few specimens have survived intact and in good condition.

Emerson also used his picture-record process

Victor Hugo Emerson learned his craft at the New Jersey and United States Phonograph Companies before joining Columbia in late 1896 as recording manager. An inveterate tinkerer, Emerson received at least fourteen phonograph- or record-related U.S. patents between 1893 and 1905.

Emerson was a major figure in Columbia's growth, and he claimed to have had a hand in conceiving and developing the popular 5-inch Little Wonder record in 1914. In 1916 he successfully sued Little Wonder founder Henry Waterson and was awarded \$46,486.59. The

to produce Talk-O-Photo records in a joint venture with R. B. ("Pat") Whelan, a physical fitness expert best known by collectors for his 1921 Musical Health Builder "Daily Dozen" records. Whelan licensed the picture disc technology from Emerson's Talking Book Corporation and filed his trademark application on August 9, 1920, claiming use of the Talk-O-Photo brand beginning June 15, 1920.

Selling for 35¢ each or three for \$1, Talk-O-Photo records featured talks and recitations by popular silent film stars and were pressed in transparent plastic laminated over a cardboard base that pictured the performer on the blank reverse side. Masters, numbered in the same series as Emerson's standard 7-inch recordings, were produced for Talk-O-Photo's exclusive use, and Talk-O-Photo catalog numbers derived from the master's last two digits (i.e., Talk-O-Photo 74 = Emerson mx. 21574), thus accounting for the large gaps in Talk-O-Photo's numerical sequence.

A July 1920 ad claimed "100 leading artists under exclusive contract" to Talk-O-Photo, including Gloria Swanson, Mae Murray, Lew Cody, and H.B. Warner, but only a handful of sides seem to have been released.

Life after the Emerson Phonograph Company: Kiddie Rekords & Kodisk

Emerson had no further connection with the company he founded after the Abrams takeover in mid-1922, but he was far from inactive. In 1922 he founded the Kiddie Rekord Company (Plainfield, New Jersey) and the Metal Recording Disc Company (New York).

The Kiddie Rekord Company was incorporated in New York with a capitalization of \$30,000 in June 1922. Pressing was contracted to the Bridgeport Die & Machine Company of Connecticut (manufacturers of Puritan discs), and BD&M president James Ogden also served as treasurer of the new company. The company filed a trade-

mark application on January 17, 1923, claiming use of the Kiddie Rekord brand on records since June 28, 1922. The 6" discs, again using Emerson's picture disc technology, were pressed in transparent plastic laminated to illustrated cardboard bases. The company apparently did not survive beyond 1923.

The Metal Recording Disc Company (New York), founded by Emerson and his son, manufactured Kodisk-brand blank metal home-recording discs. The trademark application, filed in July 1922, claimed use of the brand beginning in May of that year. Unfortunately for Emerson, acoustic home recording was plagued by technical problems, required an unwieldy recording attachment, and produced a barely audible record at best. Despite a brief flurry of advertising, Kodisk seems not to have flourished, and Emerson later sold his interest in the company.

In 1925, Emerson, in ill health, retired to California. He died there, of a heart attack, on June 22, 1926. In the fast-changing world of the phonograph, Emerson's name had already begun to fade by the time of death. The man who had once so dominated the pages of the *Talking Machine World* received only a one-paragraph obituary.

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NEW BOOK: The Talking Machine

An Illustrated Compendium, 1877-1929

By Timothy C. Fabrizio and George F. Paul

Schiffer Publishing Ltd. (ISBN 0-7643-0241-8)

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

Friends who volunteer to me impressions of this new book offer such observations as "splendid visuals," "wonderful color photographs," "so many rare machines," "glad they used high quality paper," "illustrations are so good you can see tiny scratches on cabinets," "the most attractive book about talking machines!"

I agree with these statements. The book is visually dazzling, its chief strength being the hundreds of color photographs. Next in strength are the photographs' informative captions. The text of the book's seven chapters is almost as impressive an achievement, the first five chapters summarizing the pre-WWI era extremely well.

Here is the most beautiful book published about talking machines, especially good in its treatment of pre-1910 machines. Whether \$70 is steep or fair may depend on how advanced a collector you are and how curious you are about the rarest machines to have survived. Sometimes books are priced at \$70 but are so thin that they ought to be \$20--this isn't one of those. When you examine this, you may think, "This looks and feels like a \$70 book!"

The photographs combined with incisive captions allow readers to study the talking machine's evolution in a special way. No one museum will ever display such a collection of machines. The authors visited many homes of rare and sometimes unique machines, their owners identified under photographs (I am sad that few of these advanced collectors subscribe to V78). Photographs were skillfully taken. The publisher does them justice, nothing too small or too dark.

The Metaphone, Lioret, Montross Gramophone; Echophone, Lambert Typewriter, Double Bell Wonder, Polyphone, Vitaphone machine and

red discs, red Celluloid horns, Bettini attachment, talking dolls and talking clocks--all are here in color. I wish the book had included a compact disc allowing us to hear how such rarities sound!

The authors establish on every page that they are well-qualified for compiling a history. They clearly know machines and are friendly with collectors who own museum pieces; have studied patents and legal disputes; and have scrutinized the best primary research materials, including original company literature, court testimony of company insiders, and trade publications.

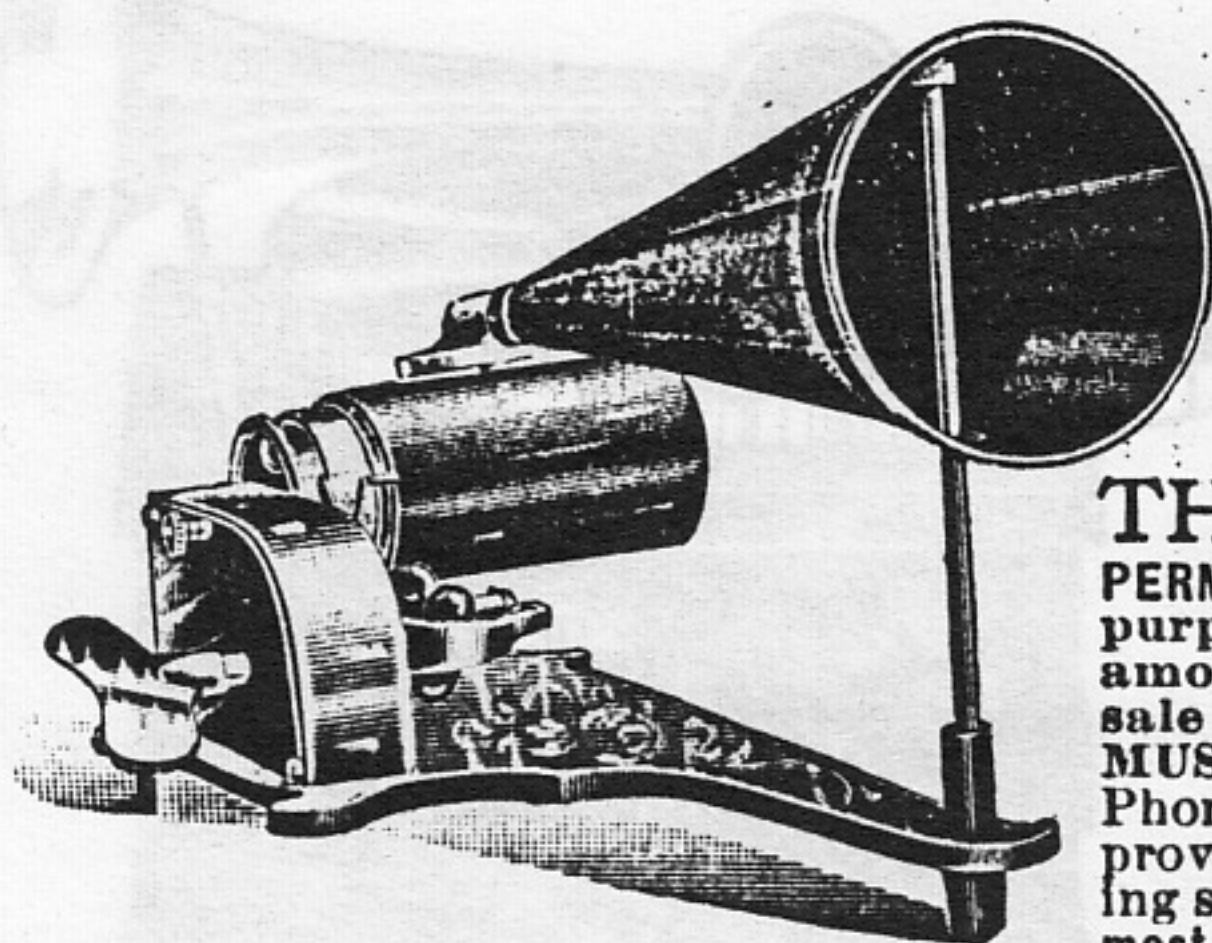
Old posters, rare photographs, and obscure advertisements add to the book's variety of visuals, making for a more effective presentation than if the book had featured page after page of phonographs.

To those who write about the talking machine industry, or plan to, I say study how Fabrizio and Paul cite original sources! On page 35 Claim Five of patent 534,543 is quoted; on page 36 part of the Annual Report of the American Graphophone Company is quoted; on page 176 the legal opinion of Judge Hough of the U.S. Circuit Court is quoted; on page 223 the August 8, 1917 issue of the rare Phonograph is quoted.

Fabrizio and Paul at least sometimes indicate sources. Other times they do not, so the text is not consistently excellent. The writing quality, documentation, and presentation of evidence are better than what we typically find in our field, which is dominated by hobbyists, but if judged by higher standards--those of academic communities--they are merely adequate, which is disappointing.

On page 34 an advertisement said to be dated February 15, 1895 is quoted, but where did the advertisement appear? Researchers ready to search for this advertisement to learn what else it

A FULL SIZE GENUINE COLUMBIA GRAPHO- PHONE TALKING MACHINE FREE.



25,000 NEW IMPROVED, PERFECT WORKING, CLOCK WORK MOTOR, NEW MODEL COLUMBIA TALKING MACHINES will be given away by us absolutely free of any cost, not one penny for the machine, subject only to the following easy conditions. We have arranged with the Columbia Phonograph Company (New York and London), makers of the highest grade talking machines made, for 25,000 of their NEW MODEL MOTOR GRAPHOPHONES OR TALKING MACHINES, every one of which are to be given away by us FREE OF ANY COST.

THE COLUMBIA PHONOGRAPH CO.

PERMITS US TO OFFER THESE MACHINES FREE OF ANY COST only for the purpose of more thoroughly introducing their talking machines among our customers and especially to introduce and increase the sale of their new, highest grade genuine moulded TALKING AND MUSICAL RECORDS. The very highest grade records the Columbia Phonograph Company makes. These new records are a wonderful improvement in volume, in brilliancy and musical quality, no harsh grating sounds, surface of record is perfectly smooth, the best wearing and most durable records, absolutely the loudest, clearest and best records in the world.

From McClure's Magazine (May 1903). Fabrizio and Paul cover the early era superbly.

says about the North American company are out of luck. On page 37 attorney Richard N. Dyer is quoted but no source is indicated, so readers will never find the quote on their own. Is the quote from a court case listed in the admirable Bibliography? In this same quote parentheses are used for a word evidently added to the quote by Fabrizio and Paul, but brackets are needed—[], not (). If authors do not use brackets, how will readers know when information within a set of parenthesis is in the original source? Were other quotes in the book modified in an unorthodox manner?

Most of the book employs a British form of punctuation, with commas going outside quote marks, but sometimes the American system is used, with commas and periods on the inside. I am being nit-picky, but erratic punctuation is a tell-tale sign that the book was published for a hobbyist market. Why not adopt higher standards? A book that meets standards used by academic presses can still be sold to hobbyists.

I say "bravo!" to the authors for the times they quote primary sources instead of the familiar secondary sources. No authors today should rely heavily on From Tin Foil To Stereo or The Fabulous Phonograph. Fabrizio and Paul do quote the latter once, on page 236, and I am reminded why researchers should eschew secondary sources and

rely upon primary ones. They quote Roland Gelatt's words about how we should "remember" the young, not the old, Edison. Gelatt puts it this way: "It is the young inventor of Menlo Park... whom we should remember, not the octogenarian businessman of West Orange puttering in his outmoded laboratory..."

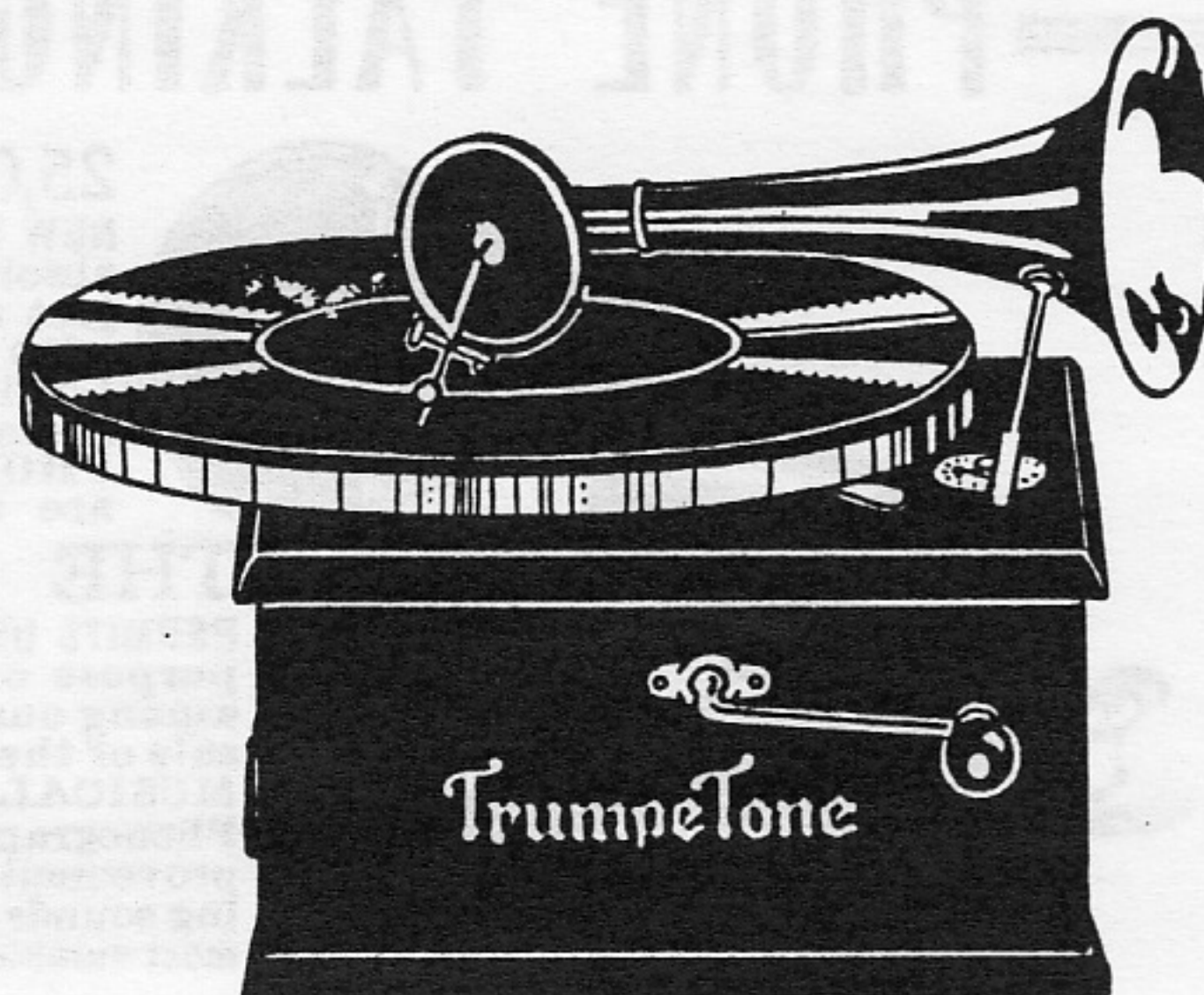
It is not worth quoting. Why can't we "remember" both, and what about the middle-aged Edison? Gelatt wrote his general history of the industry long ago, and it is not definitive. His words carry no special weight, especially here where he uses "remember" when he must mean something else. I am glad that Fabrizio and Paul directly quote Gelatt no more than once. Researchers of the 1990s risk undermining their own credibility if they treat Gelatt's poorly documented and now-outdated book as authoritative.

While I applaud Fabrizio and Paul for each citation of primary research material, one must be cautious when citing trade publications, which I regard as primary. Such journals are often solid when reporting new developments in the industry but at other times they offer advertising disguised as serious reporting. On page 187, the authors quote without comment a report from the November 15, 1910 issue of Talking Machine World that a U.S. Everlasting cylinder "was placed in a penny

arcade last March, where it remained on a machine equipped with an ordinary reproducing sapphire until the middle of October. During that time it was played 40,444 times by automatic count...It is in perfect condition, the company claims, to be played 50,000 times more..."

It is interesting! But true? Fabrizio and Paul may be quoting with tongues in cheek, but beginning collectors will not know that. Dealers routinely sent "information" to trade publications, and since no staff member verified what was sent by dealers (after all, trade journals exist to promote business), exaggerated accounts of how well products perform are common in trade journals. I say this for the sake of the novice who might conclude that U.S. Everlasting cylinders may be played 40,000--or 90,000--times and remain in perfect condition.

The book devotes the right amount of at-



tention to competing formats (disc versus cylinder), industry leaders, legal disputes, machine paraphernalia. Space devoted to each company is mostly in keeping with that company's importance to the industry, with Victor, Edison and Columbia being the Big Three for most of the book. But the last two chapters are too preoccupied with Victor and Edison to give a balanced view of the industry. Columbia is barely mentioned, and though Brunswick in the 1920s replaced Edison as one of the Big Three, Brunswick is not well-represented (two photographs).

Let us consider balance. The book in its 250 pages covers the industry from 1877 to 1929. Halfway, on page 125, it begins discussing the 1904-1908 era, which is exactly where the book should be if it is designed to give equal treatment to all decades. One could argue that balance is off in that more attention is given to obscure makers of the early era (relatively few of these machines were made) than to successful manufacturers of the WWI era and later (more machines were made). The very rare Vitaphone is represented by two photographs. Sonora--despite its many models and relatively heavy sales--is represented by two photographs. But since few authors with cameras have access to so many rare machines of an early vintage, I do not complain.

After covering the early decades superbly,

Our New No. 4 Jumbo Tone Arm. Special features are true centers for all records, **no adjustments**. **Exact** weight for playing Pathe. Best mica used. True reproduction. Many other features. Write for special bulletin. Also ask for our Hardware Bulletin.

LAKE SIDE SUPPLY CO., Inc.
202 So. Clark Street Chicago, Ill.
Telephone: Harrison 3840

The Lakeside Supply ad is from TMW's November 1917. The TrumpeTone (further above) was marketed in early 1923.

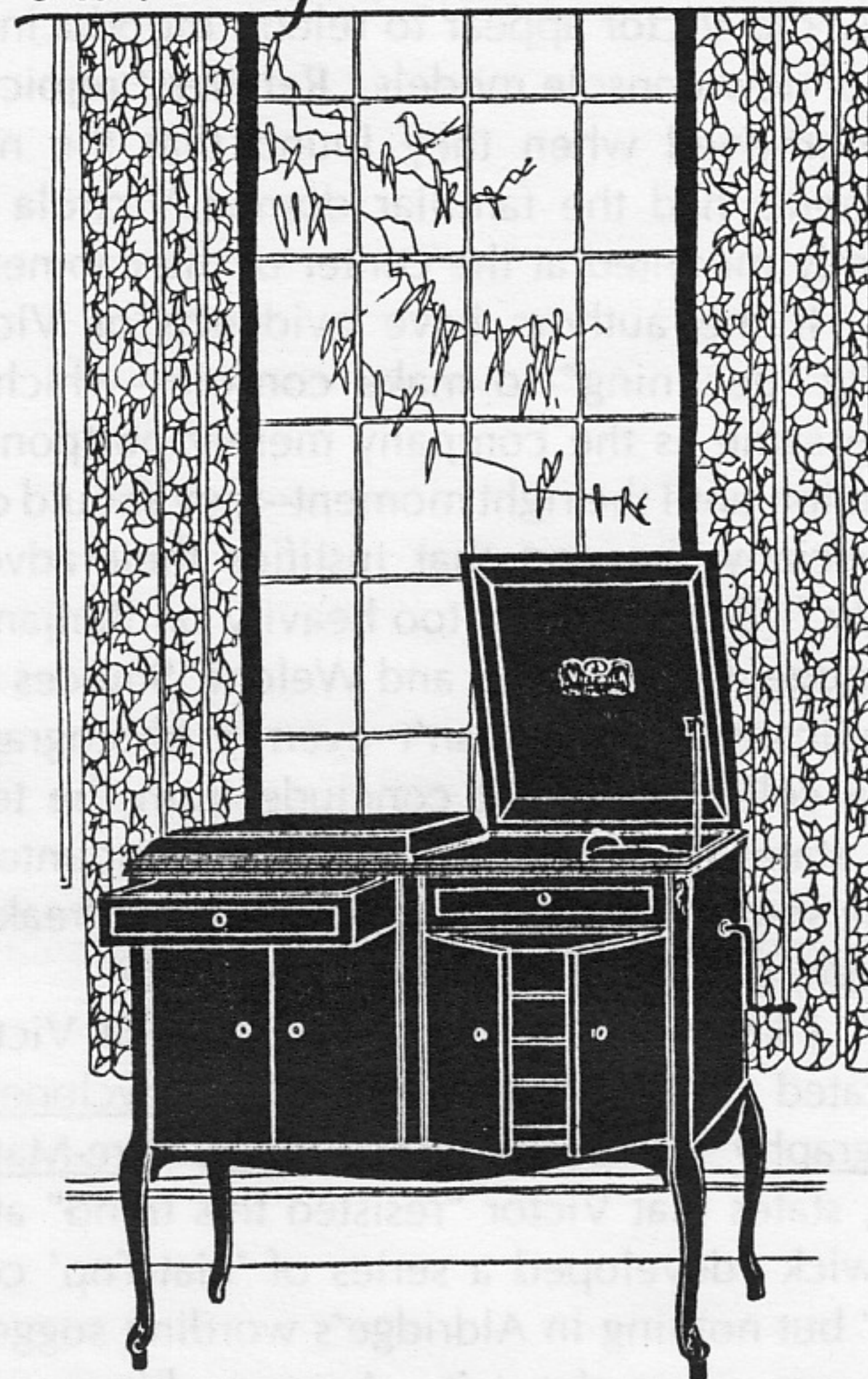
the authors rush chapters covering the post-WWI era. When they stick to facts, they are very good. When they offer interpretation or pass judgment, they are not so good in the late chapters since they do not always offer sufficient evidence to support claims. They disparage Victor but their evidence does not justify their harsh tone.

Words and phrases used to describe post-WWI Victor and its president Eldridge R. Johnson include "enormous conceit" (223), "Victor was not invulnerable, a fact which it sometimes forgot" (222), "paternalism and bullying...heaped upon their dealers...nearly turning the talking machine business into a feudal state" (223--Edison shares blame here, it is said), "initial attempts to overcome customer ennui would fail" (222), "the attitude of an ostrich" (230), "insolently" (229), "smugly" (229), and "Victor's lethargy" (231).

Page 230 states that "Victor was warming the bench in the evolving talking machine game." Page 222 announces in bold type that the Victrola was "a success in fear of change." It also states, "The 1921 catalogue of Victrolas...made no effort to depart from familiar (or maudlin?) Victor styling." In this last case the authors at least use a question mark for the derogatory "maudlin."

They say there was "public apathy toward the Victrola" (222), that "Victor Victrolas were becoming passé" (229), and that "creative ideas were not welcome at Camden" (229). Are they looking at Victor through Roland Gelatt's eyes? His Chapter 15 uses the phrase "public apathy," insists "the Victrola...was becoming démodé," and states, "New ideas in Camden had become few and far between." I am sorry to think that Fabrizio and Paul may have been influenced by Gelatt's breezy history. Consider their statement on page 229 that Victor products of the 1920s "were virtually indistinguishable from those of a decade earlier." This echoes Gelatt, who states erroneously in his Chapter 15, "The Victrola of 1921 looked almost identical with the original model of 1906." Casual observers may see no significant differences but most advanced collectors do! Because of the No. 2 soundbox and other improvements, we hear

The Greatest Value in the Talking Machine World



Did Victor at first take the position that consoles were not worth making, or did it, prior to 1921, lack the perfect opportunity to market them?

differences, too!

The Fabrizio-Paul book is likely to influence collectors in coming years, and I worry that some readers will too quickly accept the premise of Chapters 6 and 7 that Victor was stale by the early 1920s. Indeed, Chapter Seven is called "Stagnation and Innovation, 1921-1929," the early part of the decade evidently considered by them a time of stagnation for the industry as a whole. Perhaps Victor had grown stale (as a maker of machines--Victor records of the early 1920s are left out of the discussion), but the authors do not prove it.

Their key evidence is Victor's console line.

After claiming on page 229 that Victor at first "smugly declined" calls for console models, the authors give these problematic statements: "Only in 1922 did Victor appear to relent, introducing a series of new console models. Retailers' rejoicing was short-lived when they found that the new instruments had the familiar domed Victrola lid insolently mounted at the center of the cabinet."

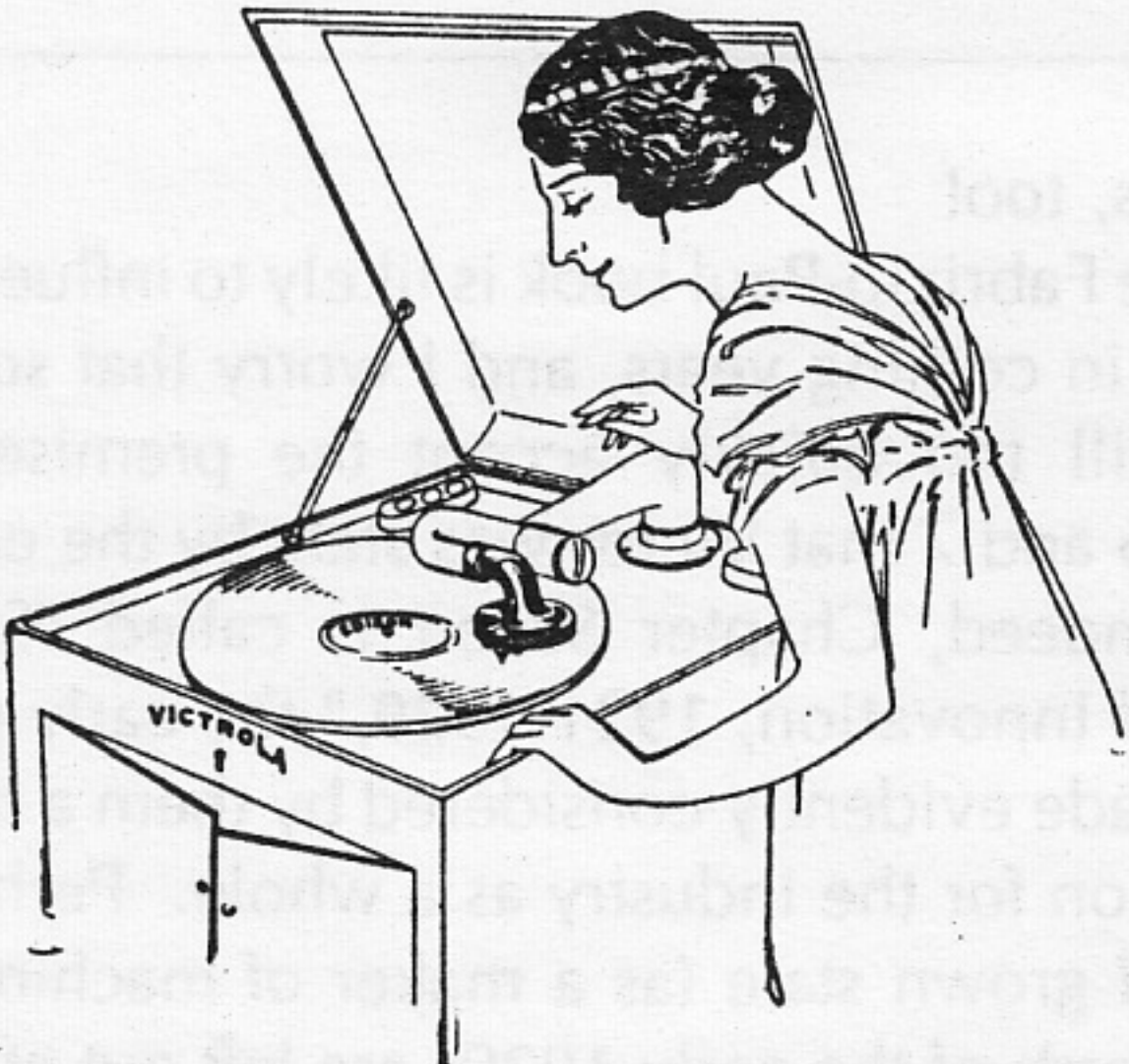
If the authors have evidence of Victor formally "declining" to make consoles—which is not the same as the company merely postponing production until the right moment—they should cite it, especially the part that justifies their adverb "smugly." Did they rely too heavily on Benjamin L. Aldridge, Gelatt, Read and Welch? Sources are not indicated. There isn't even a photograph. Novice collectors might conclude from the text, which states that lids were "insolently mounted," that the so-called humpback models were freakish in design, and that would be unfortunate.

I know that Aldridge's history of Victor, duplicated in Fagan and Moran's Encyclopedic Discography of Victor Recordings: Pre-Matrix Series, states that Victor "resisted this trend" after Brunswick "developed a series of 'Flat-Top' consoles," but nothing in Aldridge's wording suggests Victor was smug about it. Anyway, his passage about consoles lacks credibility since Brunswick was not the first to sell them. Advertisements in

Talking Machine World suggest Aeolian-Vocalion was first to develop a line of affordable consoles, and it did so long before Brunswick. The development of the console model deserves close study.

I also know that Gelatt states in his Chapter 15, "For years Eldridge Johnson had resisted the flat-top...In 1922...he appeared to have capitulated...[R]ight in the middle of the cabinet was a familiar looking object—the raised Victrola lid... Customers took a similarly derisive view of it..." Several phrases in the Fabrizio-Paul book echo Gelatt's, especially that Victor in 1922 "appeared to relent" (compare with Gelatt's "appeared to have capitulated"). Again, I am sorry to think Fabrizio and Paul may have been influenced by Gelatt.

Maybe Victor executives did spurn, or "resist," the console trend, but who has proof? Gelatt says so but provides no evidence. I wonder whether Victor had an opportunity to make them prior to 1921. Essentially forced by the government during the war to make military equipment, Victor for a long time was in no position to introduce new models, in contrast to other companies. From 1917 through much of 1920 Victor could not meet demands for existing models. Why introduce a console if it could not fill orders for XIs and XIVs? Issues of Talking Machine World establish that Victor was not caught up in orders until 1920. Not long after-



The VICSONIA

DOUBLES THE VALUE OF THE MACHINE

It is the Recognized Reproducer for Playing Edison disc records on Victor and Columbia Machines with Perfect Tonal Results

"VICSONIA" REPRODUCER

(Model "A")

ANOTHER SUCCESS!

MODEL "B" VICSONIA—Plays both **Pathe** and **Edison** disc records.—Order sample NOW. Retail Price \$7.50

A sample reproducer Model "A" or "B" will be sent on receipt of \$4.50

VICSONIA MFG. CO., Inc., 313 E. 134th St., New York, N. Y.

From the July 1922 issue of Talking Machine World.

wards Victor's first console was introduced.

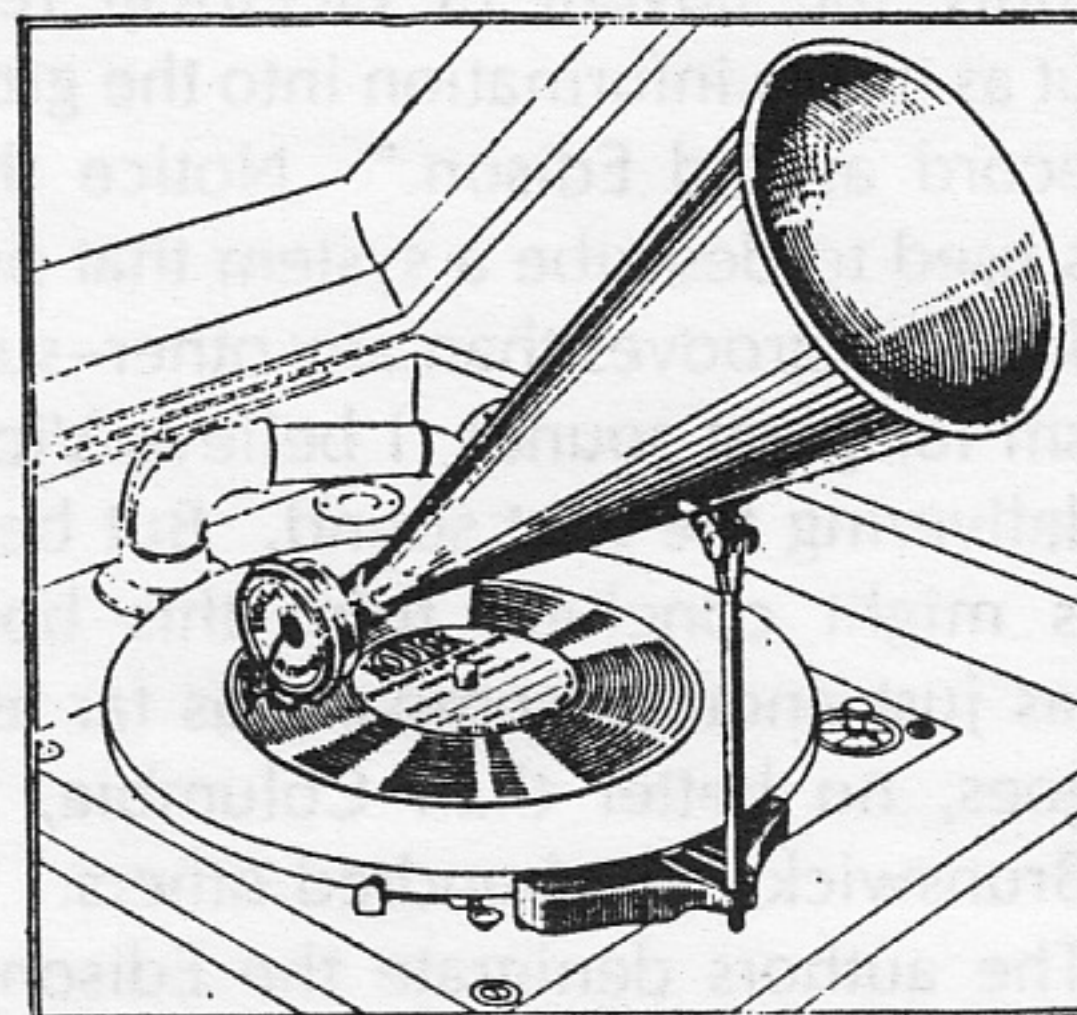
The reference by Fabrizio and Paul to 1922 and to a "series" of consoles suggest they have in mind the models 240, 260, 280 and 330, which were introduced in February 1922. They fail to mention that Victor's console model 300 (with humpback) was introduced in July 1921, and it must have been on the drawing boards several months before that. Gelatt likewise implies Victor introduced its first console in 1922 (and its first flat top consoles in 1924--off by two years). Chapter 15 of Read and Welch's From Tin Foil To Stereo is also weak on this topic, citing 1923 as the year of the first Victor consoles and 1924 for its first flat top consoles. Like Gelatt's history, Read and Welch's is poorly documented and often wrong.

So when were retailers "rejoicing" and when did they stop? Fabrizio and Paul must have a source for knowing how retailers responded, but what is that source? Talking Machine World never reported this. Voice of the Victor would never have reported that dealers were unhappy with a Victor design. Not mentioned by the authors is Victor's introduction of "flat top" consoles (the 210 and 230) in September 1922, other flat top models soon following. If "humpbacks" had been rejected, Victor wasted no time in producing flat tops. I see this as evidence that Victor executives were sensitive to public demand.

Consider the authors' tone on page 229: "Eldridge Johnson had come a long way from the eager, earnest mechanic working on a spring motor to make the Gramophone a success. He deigned now to dictate to the public what it could have, and...would suffer the consequences." "Dictate" is too strong if Johnson's chief offense is that early console models have a poorly designed lid, the so-called humpback. Anyway, comparing the "eager and earnest" Johnson of 1900-01 with Johnson of the 1920s seems as useful as comparing apples with oranges. Johnson's tiny company had grown to dominate South Jersey's economy. By the 1920s he employed over 8,000 workers and it is not clear that Johnson should have taken greater risks or insisted upon bold innovations, especially

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The Kodisk for home recording was a Victor Emerson product widely advertised in late 1922.

since Victor never slipped from being Number One in the industry (though in terms of profits Brunswick usurped Victor by the Christmas season of 1924). With the wrong innovations, Victor could have followed Columbia down the path towards receivership.

What risks should Johnson have taken that would satisfy the authors' ideas of sustained innovation? What could Johnson have done in the early 1920s to prevent radio from eating into company profits by 1924? Victor's westward expansion in 1923, with a new plant in Oakland, was an innovation of sorts (also in 1923 and 1924 the Camden site expanded--was this really a time of "stagnation"?) but it goes unmentioned. The authors present no clear evidence that Johnson was "smug" and "insolent" and autocratic by the 1920s.

If we judge industry leaders only by the

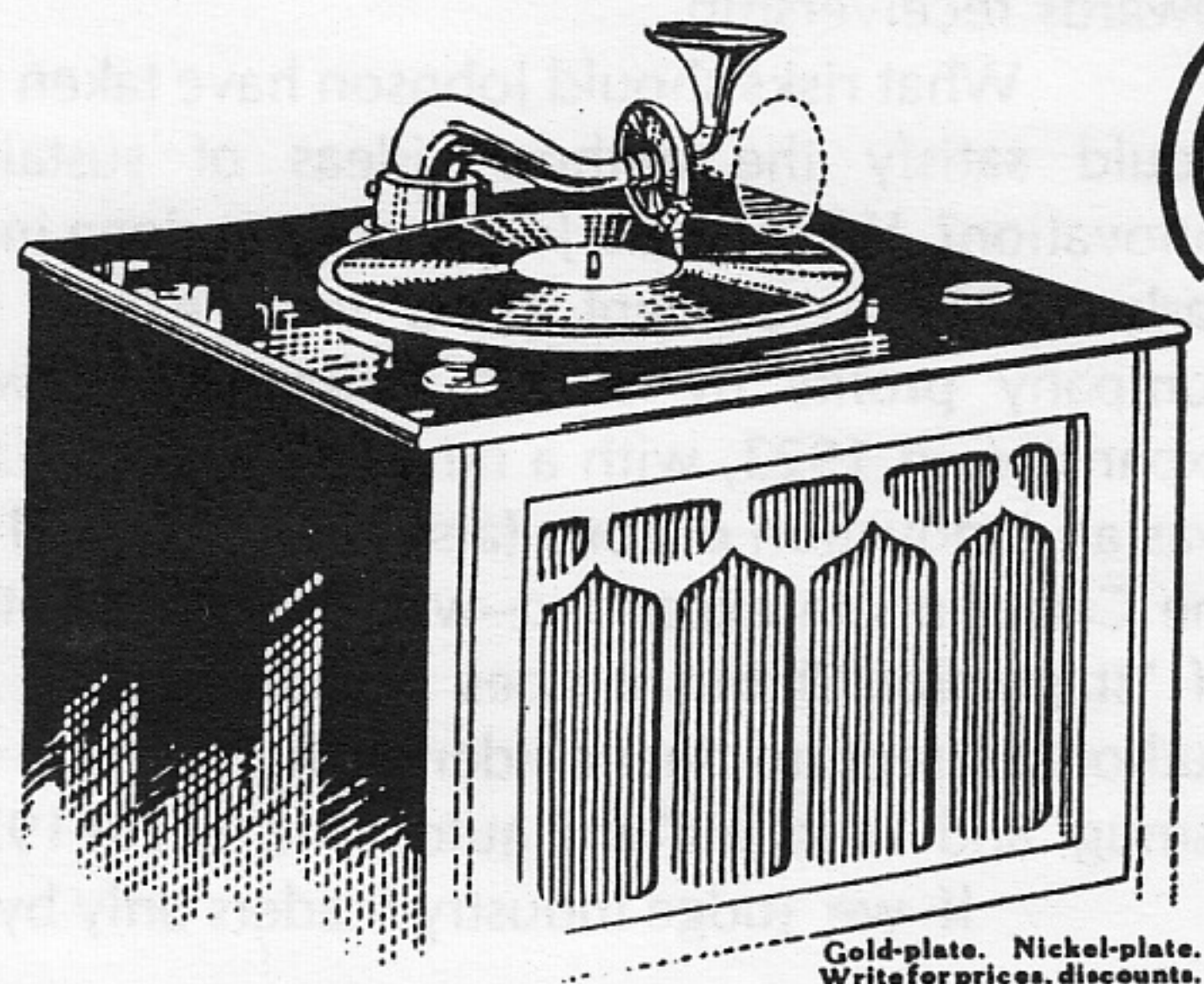
sound of their products, we have to give much credit to the Johnson of the 1920s, but Fabrizio and Paul do not discuss sound quality of machines with this exception for Edison on page 219: "This is not to impugn the Edison system--it was good. In fact, only the advent of electrical recording would put as much information into the grooves of a disc record as did Edison." Notice the mild "good" is used to describe a system that put more information into grooves than any other--such little enthusiasm for great sound! I believe Victor was next in delivering the best sound. But beginning collectors might conclude from this book that Victor was just another company as far as sound quality goes, no better than Columbia, Sonora, Brooks, Brunswick, or a hundred others.

The authors denigrate the Edison record catalog, and again I feel evidence fails to support claims. Page 230 states that the "musical repertoire lagged...twenty years behind the competition." Edison may have issued a higher proportion of sentimental songs than other companies, and most collectors today find less of interest on Edison records than on records of some other companies. I wish the authors had stated it as simply as that. The exaggerated "twenty years" is unfortunate. The company hired many of the same artists employed by other companies and recorded the same popular songs. It exploited trends--the Hawaiian craze of 1916, the "jass" craze (it issued a "jass" record in August 1917), laughing trombone

records, several others. In the early 1920s the company often issued "hot" songs within a month or two of Victor and Columbia--"Broadway Rose," "Palesteena," "Margie," "Swanee," "Alice Blue Gown." If there was "lagging" in musical repertoire, it was by months, not decades.

To support their claim that Edison was 20 years behind the times, the authors write, "One could find multiple renditions of 'I'll Take You Home Again, Kathleen' in the Edison catalogue, but only a few rather stilted jazz records." Let's look at catalogs. Edison's 1924 catalog lists two versions of the Thomas Paine Westendorf song--the common Walter Van Brunt version (80160), the other played by the Venetian Instrumental Quartet (80391). Columbia's 1924 catalog also lists two versions of the song, one performed by William Thomas (A1435), the other by Oscar Seagle (A5718). Victor's 1924 catalog also shows two versions, one by Henry Burr (18781), the other by violinist Michel Gusikoff (18987).

On page 219 the authors again denigrate Edison records and again cite a weak example: "Edison himself insisted on personal supervision of the talent...Who else could have released a solo banjo version of the 'Poet and Peasant Overture' (No. 51523)! This was a situation which could only worsen as Mr. Edison grew more curmudgeonly and popular music progressed." But as Uli Heier and Rainer Lotz's discography The Banjo on Record establishes, "Poet and Peasant



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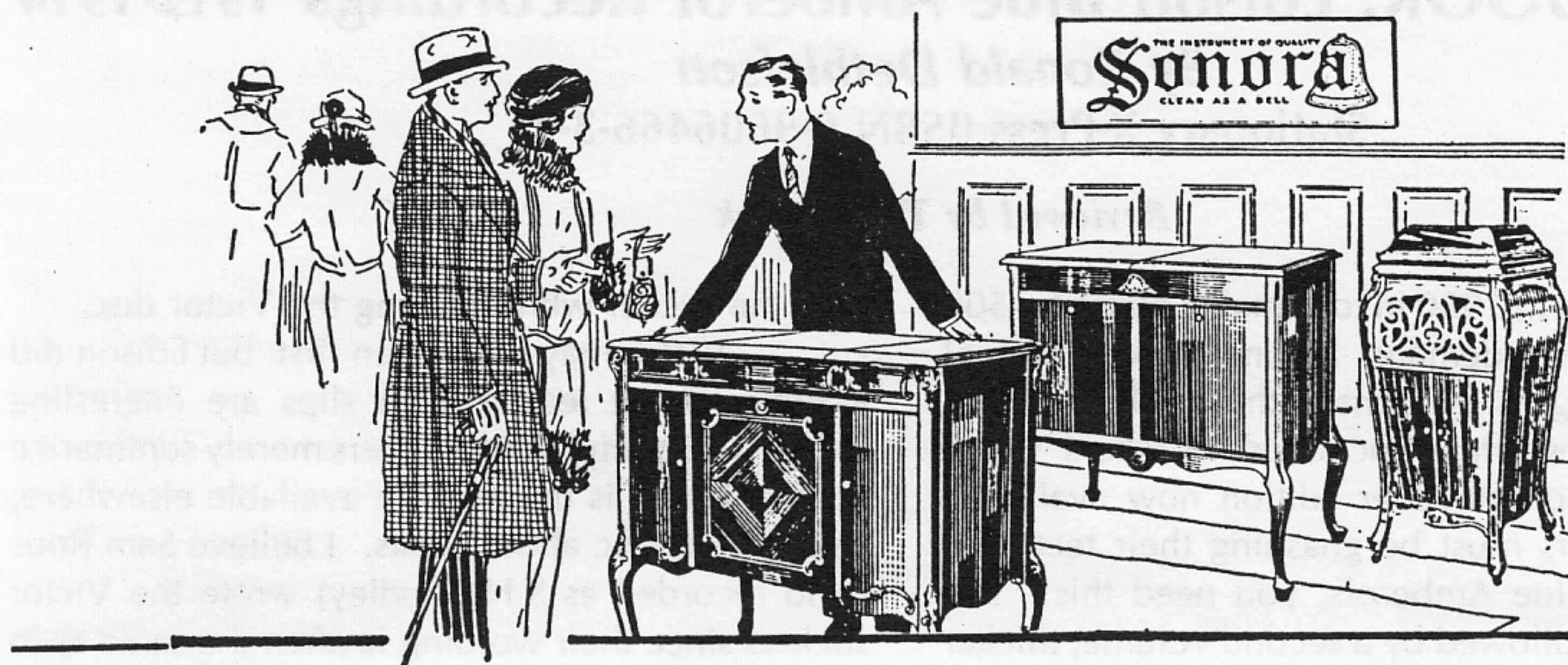
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Overture" was issued as a banjo solo at this time on Gennett 5729, Olympic 1470, Imperial 1524, Banner 2124, Regal 9929, Apex 8412, Domino 01500, Starr 10082, and Leonora 10082 (it was issued in 1929 in England on various labels and again in 1931). It is the wrong example if one wishes to prove that Edison was out of touch.

Also, Diamond Disc 51523 was issued in July 1925. Did the situation "only worsen"? Soon afterwards "hotter" songs were issued, new artists hired. To cite a 1925 record after saying that Edison "insisted on personal supervision" of artists suggests only Edison picked selections as late as this, but the jacket for Diamond Disc 50607, issued in 1920, mentions a "critic's studio" and "committee." (Ron Dethlefsen tells me Edison was solely responsible for titles just in the months Diamond Discs were introduced, after which he was one of several who decided what was released. I suspect he stopped picking altogether around the time Charles Edison was elected company president in 1926.)

I would not single out these passages in Fabrizio and Paul's final chapters if I were not convinced that this book will influence collectors in coming years. After all, this is the best book ever published about phonographs! But if nobody points out that Fabrizio and Paul's criticisms of Victor and Edison could be better supported, future collectors might quote as gospel these underdeveloped passages. That would be a shame.

To advanced collectors I give this book my

highest recommendation. For beginning collectors or others eager to learn about affordable machines available at estate sales and flea markets, I qualify my recommendation. Beginners won't be excited by the photographs of talking dolls, coin-operated machines, or the Lioret Clock. A novice will not care that page 84 gives different views of a three-cylinder pantograph but might want more information about the Victrola XI and XIV (I am happy that each is represented by a photograph--the XVI is shown twice, in Circassian walnut and also "Oriental finish"). To indicate to novice collectors the popularity of portables in the 1920s, the book might have shown more than just the Victrola 50. Aeolian-Vocalion and Cheney are never mentioned but five photographs of Talkophones are included. Can there be any doubt this book caters to advanced collectors, especially of early machines?

No one volume can cover every machine. Since I admire rare and unusual machines, I love this book. To beginners, I say this is a gorgeous book that will help you understand how the industry evolved but I should also warn that it may not say enough about machines you have a chance to own someday.

For a postpaid copy signed by both authors, send \$73.95 to Tim Fabrizio, PO Box 10307, Rochester, NY 14610. Phone is 716-244-5546; e-mail is phonophan@aol.com. Residents of NY must add \$5.92 sales tax per book.

NEW BOOK: Edison Blue Amberol Recordings 1912-1914

By Ronald Dethlefsen

Stationary X-Press (ISBN 0-9606466-3-4)

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

Issued in 1980 in too small a quantity--500 copies--to meet demand among Blue Amberol collectors, original editions of this book have sold for high prices when auctioned in recent years. With a revised soft-cover edition now available, auction dealers must be gnashing their teeth. If you collect Blue Amberols, you need this. The original was followed by a second volume, thicker than the first, again 500 copies: Edison Blue Amberol Recordings 1915-1929. I hope that second volume is also reprinted.

Most pages of this revised edition duplicate information on the descriptive slips included with Blue Amberol cylinders issued from December 1912 (Blue Amberols came out a month earlier, in November, without slips) to September 1914. I call them slips, as does author Ron Dethlefsen. The November 1912 issue of Edison Phonograph Monthly announcing the innovation calls them "four-page folders." Wrapped around celluloid when cylinders were placed in cardboard containers, the "folders" were produced because, according to EPM, "the Phonogram and Record Supplements did not afford sufficient space to permit of anything more than a suggestion of the character of the selection in question...The new enclosures will give us an opportunity to do a little educational work along music lines..."

To include explanatory text for all domestically issued records was novel. Had companies followed Edison's example, we would be better informed today about performers and song histories! In its "patents label" era, Victor began adding to the backs of selected records--some Red Seal, purple label, even single-sided black label discs--stickers that discuss performances, usually also translating arias. I call them stickers though the company probably used a dignified term such as descriptive labels. Some were put on discs into the early "wing label" era. Of course, one may not

read the sticker while playing the Victor disc.

Victor may have been first, but Edison did it better, or at least Edison slips are interesting today. Too many Victor stickers merely summarize operas, which is information available elsewhere. Few get specific about artists. I believe Sam Rous (who recorded as S.H. Dudley) wrote the Victor stickers since their wording is often the same as in Rous's Victor Book of the Opera volumes. He obviously did not trust listeners to come to sensible conclusions because stickers regularly stress how great the featured artists are. Edison slips, on the other hand, give facts found nowhere else and are less guilty of promotional blather.

Of the nearly 850 Edison slips issued, Dethlefsen duplicates about 230. To duplicate all would result in a book that few could afford (do all slips exist?). Dethlefsen selected what appear to be the most interesting ones, with rags well represented while not too many tangos, polkas or hymns are included. I do not see how a 200 page book on early Blue Amberols could be better!

The slips are a researcher's gold mine. On them are facts about song writers (where and when they were born); accounts of how songs were written (don't take colorful accounts too seriously!); names of singers in quartets; song lyrics.

Jim Walsh states in the book's Introduction that the slips' anonymous writer "devoted a lopsided amount of space to the composers and publishers...and rather skimmed on references to the artists." Walsh adds that the "average record buyer" would have preferred more facts about performers than about songs or composers. Is his assumption correct? Or did research at the time show that average buyers were not so interested in those who recorded popular tunes? Many early Diamond Discs state only "baritone," "tenor" and "soprano," and Columbia put the same on labels not so many years earlier. Also, a problem with

discussing artists—in summarizing career highlights—is that most worked for several companies, and to mention competitors was taboo! Surprisingly, a few Edison slips praise Richard Jose, "the phenomenal contra-tenor." Jose recorded only for Victor.

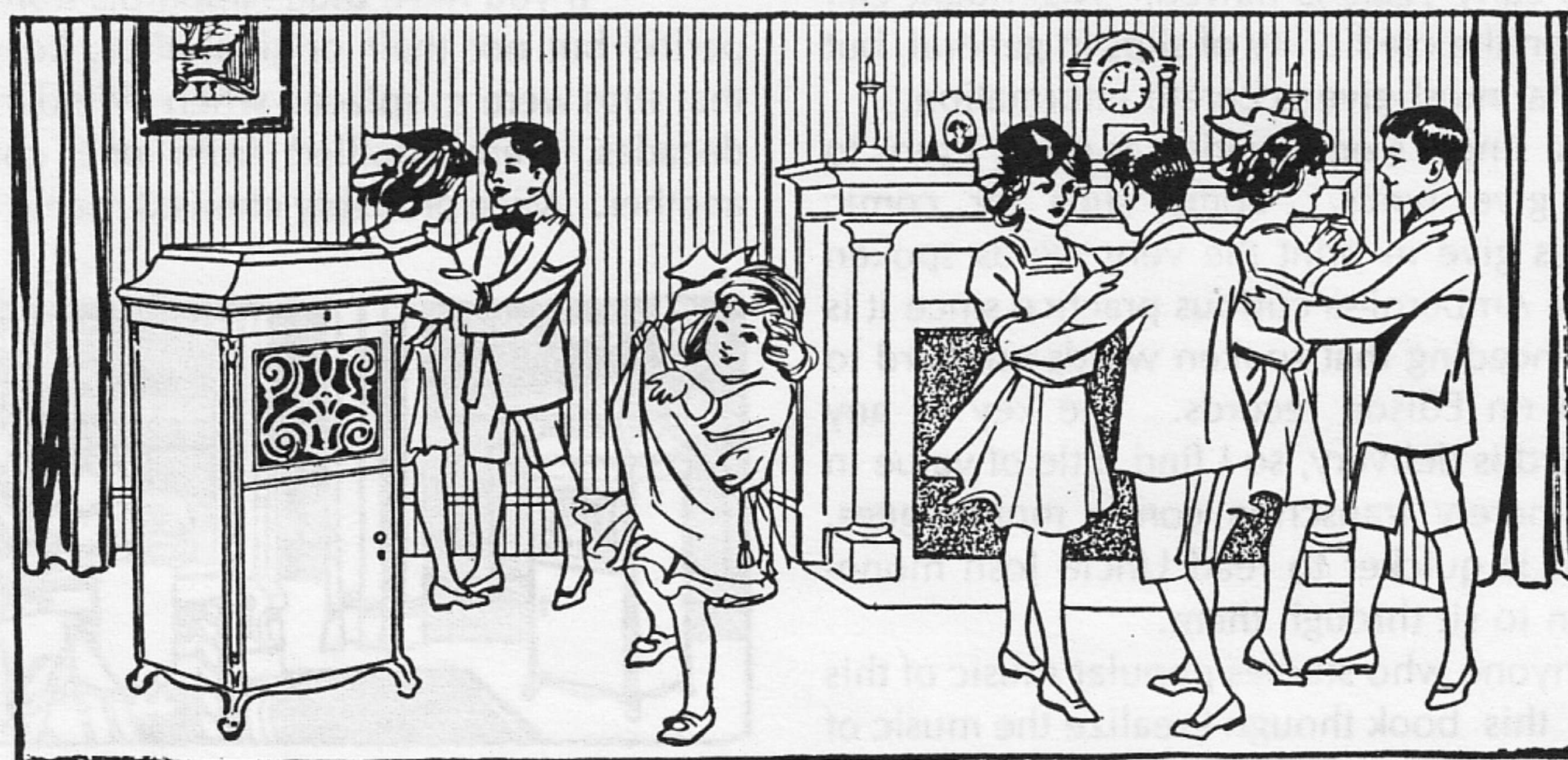
Although more attention is given to song writers, many facts are given about musical artists, and I studied slips when writing the Encyclopedia of Popular American Recording Pioneers. We learn that Charles Harrison is "a native of Jersey City" and "began his musical education at the age of sixteen under Leo Kofler." Listed are names of churches in which he was a soloist. The slip for Blue Amberol 2277 states, "Edward Meeker, in addition to being a most polished 'coon shouter'—if such a characterization is a possible one—is a regular member of the Edison Recording Staff. Personally he is just as jolly as you'd think he ought to be, after hearing him sing." That he was a regular staff member is worth knowing; that he is called "jolly" may not mean much but it is a rare instance of a slip commenting upon a singer's disposition (which performers were not "jolly"?).

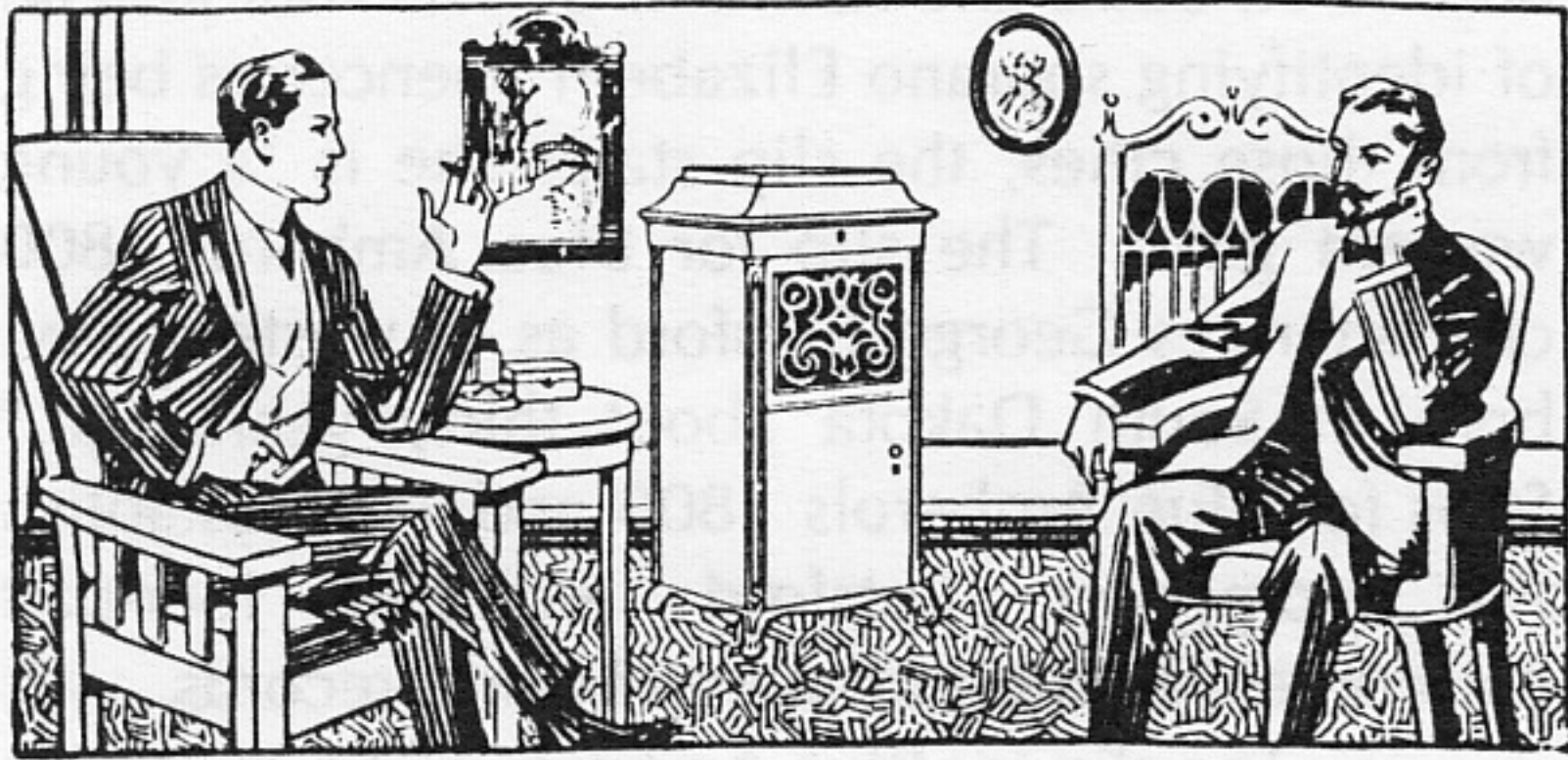
The slip for Blue Amberol 2320 states, "Nat M. Wills...was born in Fredericksburg, Virginia, on July 11th, 1873. He first appeared on the stage when a mere child..." The one for Blue Amberol 1948 states, "Billy Golden was born in Cincinnati, but grew up in St. Louis." The one for Blue Amberol 1609 refers to an artist who had been

born in St. Louis and raised in Denver—but instead of identifying soprano Elizabeth Spencer as being from those cities, the slip states she is "a young western girl"! The slip for Blue Amberol 1800 characterizes George Botsford as "a western boy, born in South Dakota about thirty years ago." Slips for Blue Amberols 1800 and 1864 establish that composer Botsford arranged four-part harmonies featured on many Edison records.

The slip for Blue Amberol 1537, "List! The Cherubic Host," stresses "the difficulty encountered in making it," adding, "Not only is the soloist Frank Croxton and a chorus employed, but besides the orchestra accompaniment, there is both a harp and an organ. The care that must be taken to successfully record these various musical sounds, to preserve an exact balance of volume between them, is enormous, and it was only after numerous trials that the record was finally declared perfect." The slip identifies chorus members as being Agnes Kimball, Marie Narelle and Cornelia Marvin. No other slip stresses the effort that went into making a record. Ironically, it is the type of cylinder that most collectors today would shove into a dark corner of a closet, if they bothered to keep it at all.

The slip for "Good-Bye, Boys," Blue Amberol 1749, says nothing about the record's singer, Billy Murray. It begins, "Harry Von Tilzer, one of the best known popular song composers of the present time, was born at Detroit, Michigan, in





1872." These facts about Von Tilzer may be found elsewhere since he was famous, but where else may one go to learn about obscure composers whose work was on Blue Amberols? Anyone curious about Tin Pan Alley craftsmen will find these slips fascinating though I believe Blue Amberol 1808's slip is wrong to claim that Von Tilzer's "first real success was made by 1894, with a piece called 'The Ragtime Dance.'" The earliest known published work with "ragtime" in its title is from 1897. Von Tilzer's "The Ragtime Dance," not be confused with Joplin's "Rag Time Dance," was recorded on Berliner 0815 as a banjo duet on December 14, 1899, so I suspect it was published in that year. Von Tilzer's "Rastus Thompson's Rag Time Cake Walk" was published in 1898.

The slip for "When I Get You Alone To-Night," Blue Amberol 1602, discusses Billy Murray, but as Walsh points out, the account of the tenor's early years is flawed. That might call into question the credibility of slips in general, but I believe that most give accurate information.

If a singer's enunciation is poor, I turn to slips that give lyrics. Some slips for comic monologues give in print the very words spoken on the Blue Amberol—a curious practice since it is close to conceding that spoken words are hard to understand on Edison records. The key to any comic record is delivery, so I find little of value in slips that merely transcribe comic monologues. Certainly it is quicker to read Uncle Josh monologues than to sit through them.

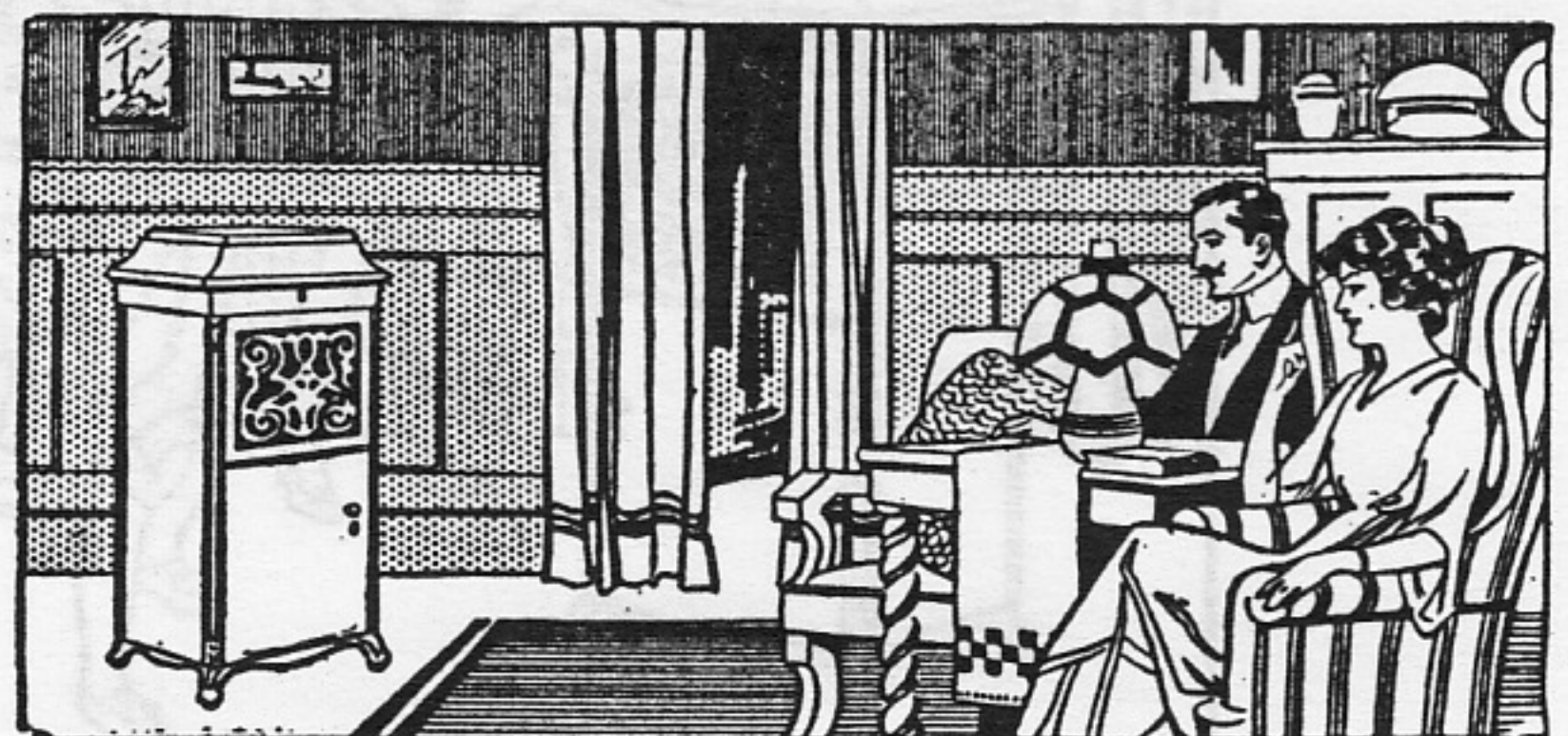
Anyone who studies popular music of this era needs this book though I realize the music of

1912-1914 is not everyone's favorite—no songs with "blues" in the title, no fox-trots. Edison's first fox-trot appears to be "Ruben-Fox Trot," recorded by the National Promenade Band on September 12, 1914. It was issued as Blue Amberol 2470 in December 1914, too late to have a slip.

It was an era of rube duets, quartets, and "ragtime novelties." The Hawaiian craze had not started but "Aloha Oe" was issued on Blue Amberol 1812. Dancers were fond of the two-step, hesitation waltz, and Turkey Trot. According to the slip for Blue Amberol 2161, the tango—also popular—"is said to have originated in Mexico, from whence it spread to Argentina first, and by this devious route, finally reached the United States." Blue Amberol 2159 features Collins and Harlan singing "Underneath the Tango Moon," and its slip claims it is the first "jungle-tango" ever written (the last one too?). The maxixe, a Brazilian form of the tango, was also danced.

Three slips, all from 1914, characterize numbers as one-steps: Sigmund Romberg's "Some Smoke One-step" (its slip states that "for both the Two-step and Turkey Trot it is equally suitable"); "Castle House Rag One-Step," written by Jim Europe (this slip, for Blue Amberol 2407, is among the most interesting); and "Down Home Rag—One-step," composed by Wilber C. Sweatman (it was often "Wilber in those days instead of "Wilbur"). The one-step's heyday was 1914 to 1920.

If you have Blue Amberols from this early period but not their original slips, keep in mind that slips were misplaced when cylinders, over the decades, were shuffled from one container to another. Mice probably chewed many, taking bits



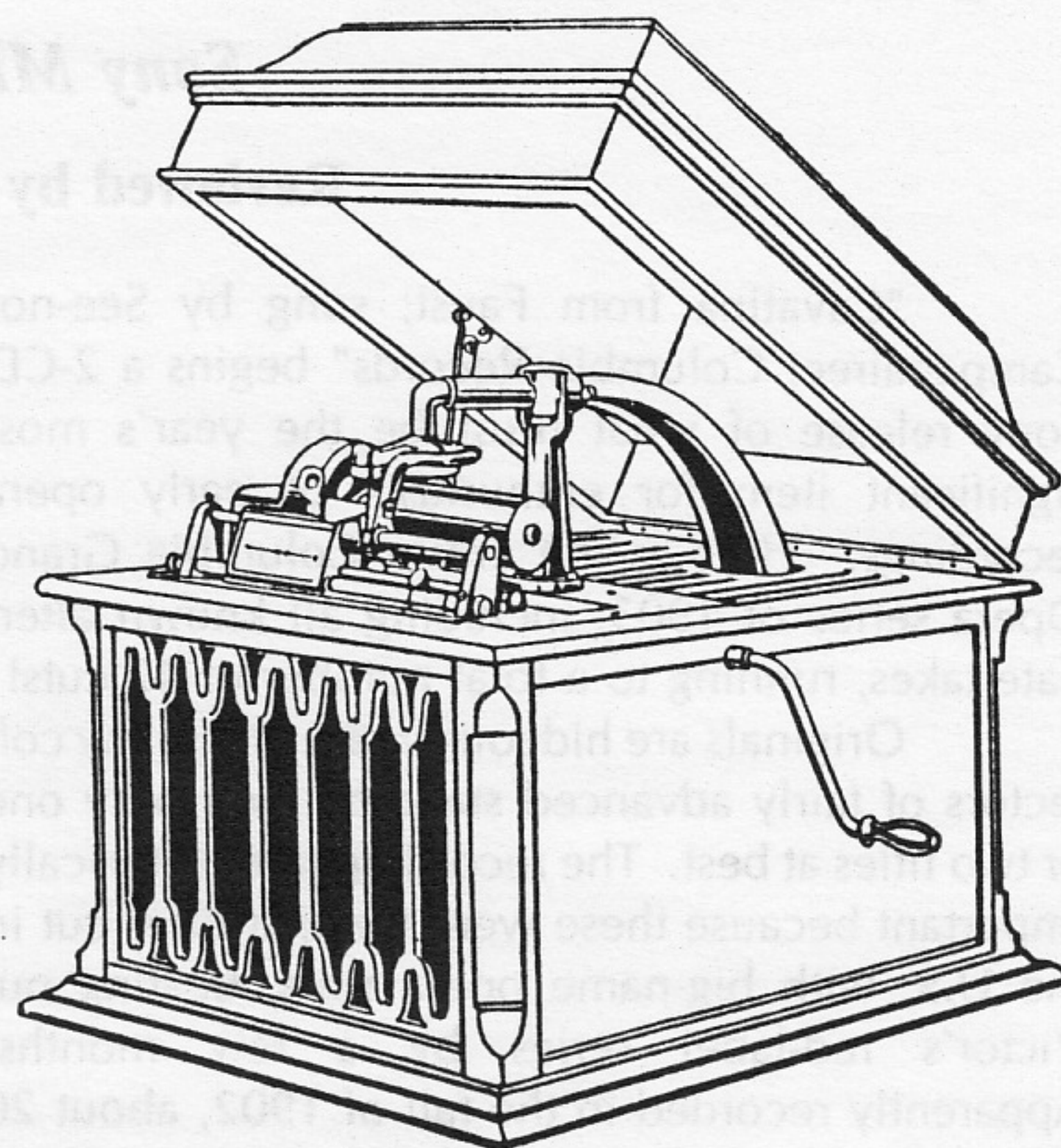
to pad nests. Because many original slips are lost or were destroyed, with remaining ones often in poor condition, this book is invaluable. It does not actually duplicate originals, with exceptions on pages 29 through 33. Dethlefsen writes in his Preface that he chose "to reset the slips rather than use facsimiles because many slips had begun to crumple or were so waterstained as to be barely legible....However, the slips have been reset with great care to preserve the original typefaces and punctuation--and even misprints."

That great care was taken is evident throughout the book except on page 27--words are missing from a slip, its punctuation altered, one of its sentences making no sense (compare with page 27 of the first edition). This might raise questions about whether slips elsewhere in the book were transcribed accurately, but those typed around 1980 by Roberta Bowen for the first edition are again duplicated in the revised edition, and the job was well done, which I know from comparing slips in my collection with the book's transcriptions.

Slips were issued for two years. To do "a little educational work"--their raison d'être--often costs too much money. The Edison company never announced why it ceased issuing slips in 1914 but we may assume their elimination was a cost cutting measure. Victor must have stopped attaching stickers for this reason. (Has anyone studied Victor stickers? What disc was first to receive one and what disc was last? What or who determined that a certain record merited a sticker?)

Also included in Dethlefsen's book are rare photographs of Edison artists, biographical sketches (information was obviously supplied by the artists themselves), pages of original advertisements, and a long "Historical Overview" essay written by Dethlefsen, who authoritatively discusses Blue Amberols from technical and commercial viewpoints.

This second edition includes information uncovered in recent years. Dethlefsen notes in his new Preface that "we now know to a great degree how Blue Amberols were dubbed from discs and how the actual production of cylinders took place.



The Amberola V--Introduced In March 1913

We can even extrapolate the quantities of Blue Amberols produced by noting the mould numbers on cylinders." New visuals includes photographs from the Henry Ford Museum of Blue Amberol record presses in August 1929 as well as Blue Amberol "backing machines," used to apply plaster of Paris to cylinders.

Die-hard collectors excepted, the revised edition may not include enough changes to justify its cost if you own the first edition, but I grab this revised edition when seeking the most accurate information available about early Blue Amberols.

Allen Koenigsberg deserves our gratitude for publishing the first edition in 1980, and Robert Baumbach deserves it for making the book available again. Baumbach's Stationary X-Press has published three excellent books in the last couple of years. I view it as today's leading publisher of books about the talking machine industry.

For a postpaid and autographed copy, send \$29.95 to Ron Dethlefsen, 3605 Christmas Tree Lane, Bakersfield CA 93306-1114.

NEW CD SET: The 1903 Grand Opera Series

Sony MH2K 62334

Reviewed by Charles Arnhold

"Cavatina from Faust; sung by See-nor Campanaire; Columbia Records" begins a 2-CD Sony release of what must be the year's most significant item for enthusiasts of early opera recordings. Here is the entire Columbia Grand Opera series of 1903, including all known alternate takes, running to a total number of 47 cuts!

Originals are hideously rare and many collectors of fairly advanced standing own only one or two titles at best. The recordings are historically important because these were the first titles cut in the U.S. with big-name opera stars, beating out Victor's red-label series by a few months. Apparently recorded in the fall of 1902, about 20 titles were issued in March 1903 (no Gilibert items despite his name being listed in initial announcements), others available soon afterwards.

They were at first issued with much fanfare on a special red and gold label. By May Victor was suing over the rights to the red and gold color scheme, and when that company was declared the, um, "victor," Columbia changed its label to black and silver. Single-sided copies of the 10-inch discs sold for \$2, a big sum in those days. Later double-sided issues at \$2.50 were something of a bargain.

It is difficult to tell how long the records remained in the catalogs but eight titles are known to have appeared on light blue, gold-note double-sided issues around 1907 or 1908: Campanari's L'Africaine aria coupled with Scotti's Carmen aria (his French version, never issued in single-sided form), Campanari's Barbiere and Carmen arias, Sembrich's Ernani and La Traviata arias, and finally de Reszke's Ernani and Marta arias. This last is also known to exist as a rare tri-color banner issue.

The name Grand Opera Series is based upon its singers being opera stars. It is not based upon actual selections since out of 32 titles, only 16 are opera arias, the other 16 being songs. This is surprising since Columbia's original brochure (a

facsimile is part of the CD set's packaging) emphasizes that, with these records, opera was available to households everywhere: "Thousands upon thousands of men and women of rare musical taste whose means are taxed to the utmost by those depending upon them, or whose geographical location renders it impossible for them to reach large musical centres, have hitherto passed their lives without ever having heard a note of Grand Opera and with no realizing sense [sic] of what music really is when interpreted by a master. The Graphophone...[has] now brought Grand Opera and great singers into the homes of rich and poor alike."

I doubt if the poor, in an era when a three-course lunch in a good restaurant could be had for fifty cents, lined up in droves to buy these records at \$2 apiece. I also wonder how much Grand Opera flooded the home when Suzanne Adams' "Sunbeams" or Sembrich's "Voci di primavera" was spinning on the family Graphophone.

One curiosity of the Grand Opera Series is the absence of tenors. A quirk of history? In 1902 the Met experienced a shortage of top-rank tenors.





Jean de Reszke had departed the year before and Caruso, already under contract to the Gramophone Company, was still a year away. Without question Columbia's star catch was Sembrich, then queen of the Met with six more seasons ahead.

The Edouard de Reszke records are of utmost importance as the only commercial output by either of the two legendary brothers, who can be heard nowhere else aside from Mapleson's dim cylinders. In ways the discs of this bass are disappointing though I believe they show he was a finer singer than some critics report. Most accessible to modern ears is the Marta Porterlied, famous for the trills, but in all three recordings are moments of beautiful singing—a fine mezzavoice in the Tschaikovsky Serenade for instance. It is partly the atrocious Columbia acoustic which makes the voice sound squally at times. The records remind one of Shaw's observation that "brer Edouard" was happiest when bawling with all his might!

The Sembrich selections show hesitancy at times but the singing is fine. Little of her vocal timbre shines through but neither does the hootiness so noticeable in some Victors. On the Columbias is an incessant "burbles" to the voice, not unlike that which might be reproduced from a bumpy-surfaced record. If it is a shellac problem, it is not so prominent on other singers' records.

Campanari and Schumann-Heink are much

themselves. They can be heard to better effect on later records and at far less expense for originals. Scotti's three arias—from Carmen, I Pagliacci, and Don Giovanni—are representative of his career at this time. The Carmen toreador song is interesting in that the first take, 1205-1, was recorded in the original French but was not issued in single-sided form. The Italian version issued in single-sided form bears matrix 1205-3. In other singers' cases, alternate takes are numbered sequentially, so we must wonder what and where is Scotti's 1205-2?

David Banks' copy of Adams' "Printemps Nouveau" has a black and silver label which cites Adams' husband, Leo Stern, as composer. The original Grand Opera Records booklet also credits Stern. It states, "Readers of our catalogue will be interested in knowing that No. 1195, entitled 'Printemps Nouveau,' a delicious waltz, was written for Madame Adams by her husband." But what Adams sings is not a waltz, and "Printemps Nouveau" was in fact written by Paul Vidal. The 1904 Columbia catalog accurately attributes the song to Vidal. There must have been a mixup due to Stern having written a waltz titled "Printemps," later recorded by Lucy Isabelle March (Victor 60037) and Olive Kline (Victor 17135).

Then there is Charles Gilibert, whose program of French songs, in spite of the ever-present "Les Rameaux," appeals to me more than the other singers' selections. Gilibert was a fine high baritone, and his handling of these rare titles is, for me, the most consistent vocal treat in the series. Curiously, he announces three titles in French, two in English, and one ("Les Rameaux," #1251-1) not at all. His series, by the way, contains the only duet Grand Opera recording, the song "Colinette" sung with his wife, mezzo-soprano Gabrielle Lejeune Gilibert (#1254-1).

Had Sony stopped with the Grand Opera selections, the second CD of this set would be rather short. Other Columbia artists were added to fill out the program—Blauvelt, Nuibo, Journet, van Rooy, Arimondi, Castellano, and a later Gilibert. Not one of the originals is easy to obtain nor, as far as I know, have any been reissued on LP or



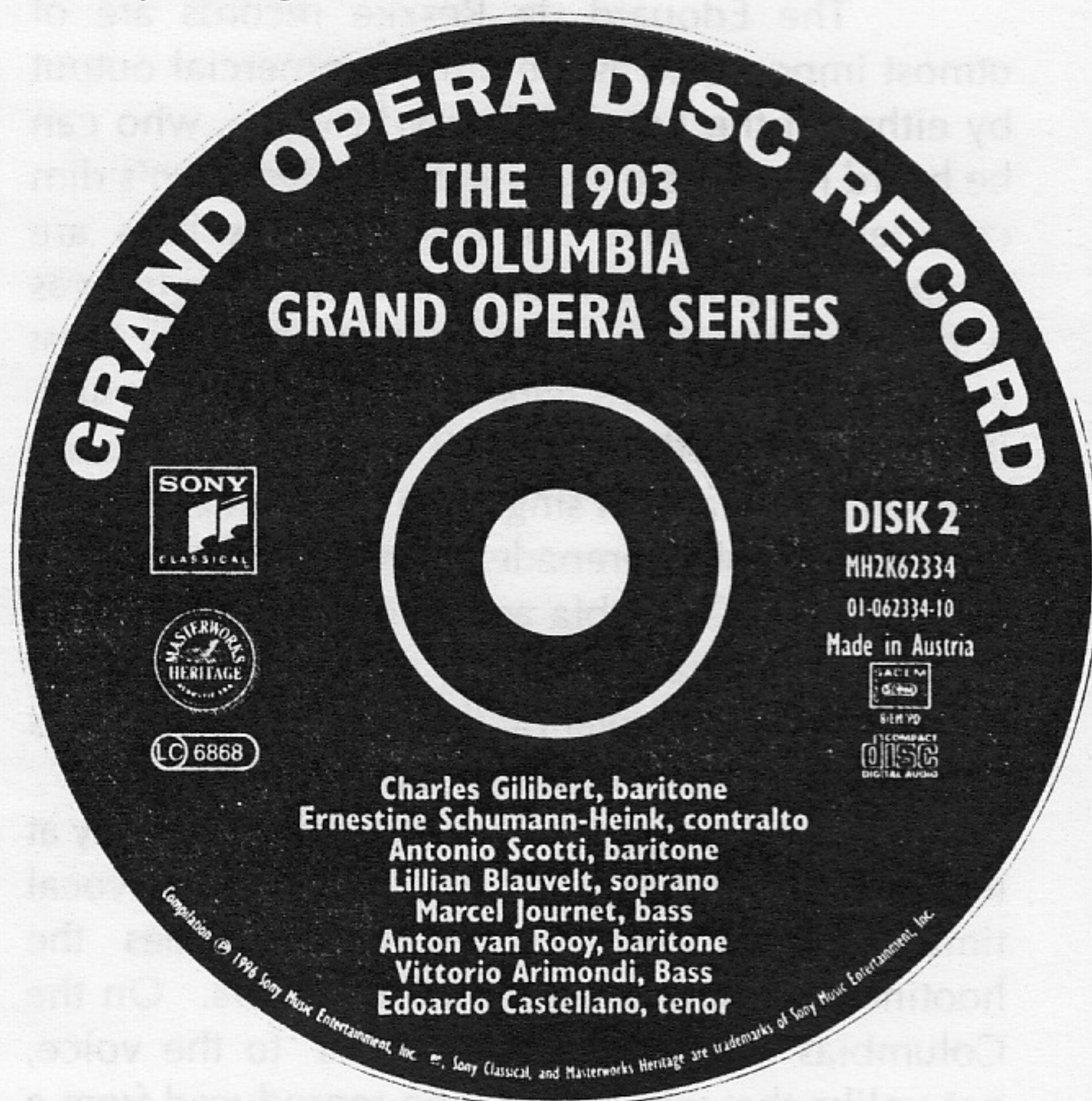
CD, so here is a real collectors' bonus.

Sony spared no effort in reproducing these rarities. The CDs are even colored like the originals, with disc 1 in red and gold, disc 2 in black and silver. Interestingly, Sony has only two of the original matrices, the Scotti I Pagliacci and take 1 of the Sembrich Ernani. I heard that a negative, saddle-shaped stylus was devised to play original matrices, and it does seem that these two cuts sound extra clear. This raises a question. In the early '60s Columbia allowed Tom Lincoln to make vinyl pressings from a few matrices, including a Schumann-Heink Lucrezia Borgia, a Sembrich title, and also (not part of the Grand Opera series) a 10-inch unpublished "Annie Laurie" sung by Olive Fremstad. What became of those masters?

I cannot imagine a more satisfying reissue. A tremendous amount of work must have gone into it, and no enthusiast of early operatic records should neglect to buy the set. The last time the Grand Opera series was reissued was in 1963, and the LP set suffered from too much filtering, it lacked alternate takes, and the pitch of some selections was off, which raised controversy. As far as I know, most originals play at around 80 rpm. Sony engineers seem to think so.

I wish companies that reissue early recordings would make known the equipment used when dubbing, particularly what cartridge and stylus were used, perhaps even selected equalization curves. My only criticism of Sony's set concerns the actual sound of the voices. Everything technology can do seems to have been done, yet there is something a little less palpable to the voices on CD than what I hear when playing the few originals that I possess. Certainly the Sony dubs come through with clarity, yet there is a little less of a human being present when I compare a CD track with an original. Since there were never any really good LP dubs of these ancient discs, I cannot say if this dehumanizing of the voices is part of the digital process or due to the sound engineer's choice of reproducing equipment.

I hear that Sony is planning a set that combines the complete recordings of Lillian Nordica and Olive Fremstad. Yes, please. Good times have just begun!



Every few decades Grand Opera records are reissued—Jack Caidin dubbings in the late 1930s, an LP set in the 1960s, now a CD set. What is next?

NEW BOOK: American Premium Record Guide 1900-1965, 5th ed.

By Les Docks

Krause Publications (ISBN 0-89689-124-0)

Reviewed by Nolan Porterfield

Record price guides, someone has said, are like love letters--full of promises but short on sanity. Experienced record collectors know by heart the old adage: "Any record is worth only what someone is willing to pay for it." Yet the pulse of even the most jaded of us beats a bit faster upon flipping through a price guide and finding one of our old Bluebirds or Champions listed at, say, "\$100.00 - \$150.00."

There it is, in cold type, in black-and-white: big bucks. In the rapture of the moment we're oblivious to certain facts of life: a) the figure given is probably only a reasonably informed "guesstimate," b) any copy which might bring that much would have to be in near-mint condition, c) there may not be a soul on earth who, at this moment, wants that record at any price, and d) if such a person exists, our chances of finding him or her forthwith and making a cash transaction at the listed price are slim.

Once harsh reality again descends, all we've gained from the price guide is the knowledge that the record collecting community thinks rather more fondly of our old Bluebird or Champion than the general run of work by, say, Joseph C. Smith or Perry Como. For me, that's enough to justify the existence of record price guides, although I'm sure others will continue to debate their merits and villainies throughout time.

The preeminent price guide is Les Docks' American Premium Record Guide (hereafter APRG), which first appeared in 1980 and is now in a considerably revised fifth edition. Docks' book is not without shortcomings, but it remains a formidable presence, the most interesting, reliable, and comprehensive work on the subject. The new edition, some fifty pages larger than the 4th edition (496 pp. v. 447 pp.), boasts 30,000 individual re-

cordings, 9,000 price changes, and listings for 7,500 recording artists, of which 900 have been added since the previous edition (all according to jacket blurbs; I haven't counted 'em).

For label collectors, the 5th edition has 66 pages of label photos illustrating 1,650 labels (I have counted those, and they total six more pages and fifty more photos than the jacket claims). More importantly, for the first time Docks has included a brief guide to prices for "Scarce and Unusual Labels." This is a welcome addition though one may quarrel with the figures he gives. I'd be happy to pay the "\$4.00 - \$7.00" he shows for an Autograph, for example, or even his "\$50.00 - \$100.00" for a Black Patti. It's also a minor irritant that in the text Docks mentions Claxtonola, Harmograph, Hy-Tone, and Mitchell among his "scarce and unusual labels" yet fails to show prices for them--one of several idiosyncrasies.

Some quirks are simply built into the book's content and organization, but categorizing 30,000 recordings by combinations of format, performance, and era is no easy task. Almost any reference work on phonograph records--whether discography, artist encyclopedia, label directory, corporate history, or price guide--is subject to the interests and eccentricities of its compiler(s) when it comes to what the book is to include, what gets left out, and how it's all arranged. We may not like that, but we might as well accept it. In nearly every case, the topic at hand is so immense and complex that no single volume is really "complete" (if it were, no one could lift it), and no two researchers are likely to agree on how to organize it. Perhaps that's part of Docks' appeal. Over the years, one adjusts to the vagaries and viewpoints of the APRG and to the tone that lurks in its shadows: crotchety, opinionated, sometimes imperious, but

also agreeable, occasionally even lighthearted.

Having said all that, I still can't resist a few observations regarding the peculiarities and deficiencies of APRC, in the spirit, if nothing else, of constructive suggestions for future editions.

Docks' essential concerns are the broad categories of American popular music—jazz, blues, country, and rock—from about 1920 to the early sixties. I detect a bias toward the earlier period even though marketplace realities demand that more space be given to the vinyl era of the '50s and '60s. Among other evidence which suggests that 78s are better than LPs, Docks boldly asserts that "the quality of the music recorded varies inversely with the technology used to record it." He further declines, emphatically, to defend or discuss the matter, but I have no problem with that since I tend to agree.

Having set out to map and assess an already immense sound-recording landscape, Docks can hardly be faulted for ignoring certain nooks and crannies, such as collectible classic music and opera or turn-of-the-century artists and

valuable labels of the early era (e.g., pre-dog Monarchs), despite his remark about quality vs. technology. But even within his chosen territory, the categories are so vast and amorphous that it's no wonder there are shifting boundaries, vague signposts, and occasional vacant lots.

The full title of the section which Docks designates primarily as "Jazz," for example, also includes "Big Bands, Dance Bands, Personality, Pop, Ragtime." It is said to cover the period from 1900 to about 1950. For Docks, apparently very little good music and few "personalities" existed prior to World War I. There's nothing by the likes of Caruso, John McCormack, Nora Bayes, however collectible. A brief list of Billy Murray records is included but apparently only by virtue of having been up-tempo or ragtime tunes of the day, not the more representative Murray vocals that also appeal to many collectors. You'll find few big bands after about 1940, and only a smattering of the best known "personalities" of the era (though additions to the fifth edition include Jane Green, Spike Jones, Dean Martin, Jane Froman, the Les Paul Trio, Desi Arnaz, and twelve titles by Sousa's Band).

At the level of specific entries, I can't help wondering why no Jelly Roll Morton Bluebirds are listed while Fats Waller's are (at "4.00 - 7.00"). The Missourians' sole title on Bluebird, "Scotty Blues" on one side of Bb 6084, is surely worth something (on Victor V-38084 it's listed at "75.00 - 100.00") but the Bluebird is not mentioned. Benny Goodman's "Dr. Heckle and Mr. Jibe"/"Texas Tea Party" on the interesting Benny Goodman All Star label (a Columbia speciality, like Whiteman "potato heads" and Ted Lewis picture labels) is conspicuous by its absence, even among Columbians in the same numerical sequence. Coleman Hawkins' Capitols and Mercuries are included, at minimal prices to be sure, but none of his three fine issues on early American Decca (1935). Docks lists Irene Scruggs' Gennett 7296, "You've Got What I What," and her Champion 16756, "The Voice of the Blues," at "150.00 - 200.00" each, yet omits Superior 2591, which contains both titles on a label that's equally scarce.



Poor Joseph C. Smith is still overlooked in Docks' price guide. This disc was the first one issued to feature a Cole Porter tune—not worth including?



Docks lists \$100-150 for Wolverines discs with Bix on cornet—one price fits all though some are more rare than "Copenhagen" on Gennett 5453. Beginners, take note: Docks does not list bootleg dubbings from the 1940s, such as the above.

There's a slug of Fred Astaire Brunswicks ("7.00 - 10.00"), but not Br 7487 (one of the earlier ones, including "Top Hat, White Tie and Tails"), nor Columbia 2912-D "Flying Down to Rio," which was pressed in blue wax and ought to be of some value on that account alone, if not for the title and the fact that it was recorded in London in the pit of the Depression (1933). Another missing and presumably valuable Astaire is Vi L-24003, a Victor 1930s "LP" which features both Fred and sister Adele doing tunes from "The Band Wagon." Ditto Waring's Pennsylvanians' "Program Transcription" Vi L-16015 ("Dance Selections"), although their Vi L-16016 and Vi L-16018 are shown at "20.00 - 30.00." Among the several Bernie Cummins' Gennetts, you won't find Gnt 5467—possibly because Rust says it wasn't issued, but it was.

I should think that Guy Lombardo's 10-inch version of "St. Louis Blues" released on var-

ious ARC labels would be of more than usual collector interest if only because of the mystery surrounding its origins (see page 1116 of Rust's American Dance Band Discography), but it's not singled out among the otherwise extensive list of Lombardos, and that issue on Vocalion 2848 is omitted entirely. I'm also curious to know what happened to Regal 9760 ("Panama Mamas," among the many titles by the Six Black Diamonds), which was once listed at "10.00 - 15.00" but somehow got lost between the third and fourth editions of APRG and has never returned. And why are Lil Armstrong and Her Dixielanders missing, while three dozen Kate Smiths are listed—at substantial prices?

My list of puzzling omissions and discrepancies goes on and on, and I'm sure other collectors have lengthy additions of their own. I'm equally sure that Docks rolls his eyes and heaves a heavy sigh at such quibbles. Do we really expect him to include everything? And if he did, how much would the book weigh, and could anyone afford to buy it? Still, while I admit that some of the omissions I've noted are both minor and subjective, others are not and could be addressed, I think, without adding substantially to either the book's length or cost.

There are also curious problems with Docks' arrangement. These may be inherent in the scope and intent of the work, and therefore "uncorrectable," but the reader should be aware of them. For instance, don't look for Ida Cox, Lovie Austin, Lena Wilson, Lucille Hegamin, Bertha Henderson and various other blues purveyors in the "Blues, Rhythm & Blues" pages. They're up front in the jazz section. Bertha Henderson somehow rates an entry in both places and turns up a third time among the rock & rollers. Some rhythm & blues artists appear in both the blues section (1920-1950) and the rock section (1950s to early 1960s). The distribution, it seems, is not only by date but by record format—those in "blues" are mostly on 78s, those in the later section are microgroove discs. That's not a major problem. An alert reader will spot "rhythm & blues" in the full title of both sec-

tions, and if all else fails, there is the ultimate fail-safe, a thorough artists index at the back.

Weirder and less defensible is the inclusion of a scads of country artists in the rock & roll (i.e., vinyl) section--Lefty Frizzell, Johnny Cash, Roy Acuff, Grandpa Jones, Gene Autry, Roy and Dale, Eddy Arnold, and more. Again, it seems to be a matter of format; most (but not all) of these listings are on 45s or LPs and thus are there apparently by virtue of having been recorded or reissued during the "1950s through early 1960s" period of the rock section. Since it also includes "rockabillys," some of them, at a stretch, might qualify on that ground. But Roy Acuff? Eddy Arnold? Because most of these country performers are not listed in the country section, they're sure to be overlooked if readers fail to consult the general artist index.

To paraphrase James Joyce, the runoff groove, past Edison and Acuff, from swerve of Swing to bend of Blues, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to where we began: money, which is the real motive behind any price



Most needle-type Edisons were valued at \$15-20 in Docks' last edition. Most are \$20-30 in the new edition. Bid twice that if you want to win a good one from an auction!

guide. In theory at least, a new edition suggests that changes have occurred in the marketplace, changes which in the recent past have generally been upward. To what extent is this circumstance realized by the fifth edition of APRG?

Collectors whose interests are covered by V78 aren't likely to find big surprises. Prices for some 78s are up a bit, a few are down, and most are unchanged. Vinyl is another story--more about that below. Exceptions will also be found among 1920s-1950s blues and (especially) rhythm & blues, where many prices have gone up, if only by a few dollars. Elsewhere I've detected fresh and increasingly heavy interest in r&b on small postwar labels such as Chess, J.O.B, Dot, Deluxe, Apollo, Specialty, and others, a trend definitely borne out by Docks' new listings. But there are also increases in the earlier era. Son House's Paramounts have doubled to "400.00 - 800.00" since the 4th edition, and Charlie Jordan's Deccas have gone from "20.00 - 30.00" to "100.00 - 150.00."

Increases can be spotted throughout the country artists section. Big jumps are mostly for obscure names such as the Carolina Mandoline [sic] Band, the Pine Knob Serenaders, and the Wise String Band, previously around \$12.00 and now \$75.00 or so. Additions to this section--at fairly nominal prices--include Chet Atkins, Patsy Montana, Louise Massey, Jimmie Wakely, and the Hoosier Hot Shots. I would think that Docks, an adopted Texan of long standing, would find room for Cliff Bruner, as well as Leon's Lone Star Cowboys on Decca 5416 and the Light Crust Doughboys' Voc 3718. And if Uncle Steve Hubbard on Gennett 6088 is worth "10.00-15.00," why not as much or more for the same performances on Herwin 75547, which is not listed?

On the subject of prices per se, Docks notes that some critics think his prices are too low. These complainers, he implies, are mostly greedy dealers who want to drive up the value of their stock. I have neither the expertise nor the inclination to comment on that situation, beyond the observation that in my experience of buying and occasionally selling records over a span of some

thirty years, I've rarely made a transaction that was within the range listed by Docks. While some have been higher and others lower, most have been close enough to make APRG a useful resource whenever I'm trying to decide on a bid or set a minimum. One notable exception that I can attest to involves Jimmie Rodgers' Victors at the high end of the 23000 series, which Docks continues to undervalue seriously.

Collectors of jazz and dance band 78s will find many new listings scattered about in the new edition of APRG, most of them obscure artists on minor or subsidiary labels. Apparently Docks has discovered new batches of collectible Champions, Bells, Van Dykes, Vogues, and 7-inch Marathons. Price increases tend to follow the same pattern (label rather than artist): many Gennetts and Paramounts are up, along with Vogues, Blu-Discs, Edison 5000s and Needle Cuts, and, in particular, Okeh 4000s and 8000s. Thomas Morris's Okehs in those series--now "50.00 - 80.00"--have roughly doubled, while Bix's Okeh 4000s are up ten or fifteen dollars. Their top price in Docks' 1980 1st edition was \$20, up to \$50 in the 4th edition, and now \$60; interestingly, the Wolverines on Brunswick, Vocalion, and Gennett remain unchanged from the previous edition.

I checked Goodman and Glenn Miller through the years and found they go up in each new APRG, but only by a few dollars, at about the rate of inflation. For the record (no pun), the most valuable old 78 for which a price is shown is King Oliver's Autograph 617, valued at "1000.00 - 2000.00," which is double the 4th edition price--but of course there's also Oliver's Gennett 5275, which might bring several thousand more. When I last heard, there was only one known copy, and Docks cautiously avoids a numerical value, listing it simply as "extremely rare."

The big money is in vinyl: rock, r&b, and blues of the 50s and 60s. Here many prices are up, up, up--three, four, even ten times the numbers in the previous edition. Some are way up; "Baby We Two" by the Rhythm Masters on Flip 314, listed at "10.00 - 15.00" in 1992, is now "250.00



Docks is strongest with blues, hillbilly, "hot" 1920s jazz, and rock 78s. Few string band 78s are overlooked! He values the above at \$25-40.

up." Even if your copy is less than mint, in five years it appears to have appreciated at least 2,000%. To his credit Docks in some of the rarest cases distinguishes between prices that have been merely "quoted" (\$10,000 in the case of the Hide-A-Ways on Ronnie 1000; Docks thinks the value is more nearly \$100 to \$150) and prices which actually "have been seen"--\$2,500 for Teen Kings on Jewel 101; \$2,000 for The Surfariis on DFS 11/12. In the previous edition, the latter was listed at a mere "30.00 - 40.00."

I would like to know more about the process of arriving at a dollar value--even a range of values--for a given record. My good friend, the late Don Brown of the Jazz Man Record Shop, insisted, only half-jokingly, that he hated mail auctions because "any time you win a record, you know you've paid too much for it." In his introduction, Docks addresses the subject of evaluation at length, realistically stressing that no price guide can claim to be "official" and that the figures in APRG are only estimates (my emphasis)

"of what...might reasonably be expected...in transactions between knowledgeable buyers and sellers." He further acknowledges that a given record may bring one figure in one auction and less than half that (or double) in another, and, indeed, he clearly asserts the First Commandment of Record Collecting: the value of any record is simply "whatever you can get for it."

As he also points out, one must beware of the guy running a garage sale who thinks he can make a killing from a batch of red-label Columbias, or the local antique dealer, who may know his Queen Anne sideboards but slaps a whopping price tag on a battered Edison Diamond Disc because it "looks old." The highest prices in APRG are fetched mostly by serious dealers who know their business and work at it, expending time and money to acquire stock, catalog it, and advertise their lists. At the same time, says Docks, there are low-life auctioneers who set unreasonable "minimums" and complain that the prices in his

guides are too low. But on the subject of just how he arrives at those prices, he is rather vague and general, and I come away from this section on "Valuation of Records" unsatisfied. A few specific examples would help.

Obviously Docks draws upon his own considerable experience as a dealer, and he also acknowledges that information is supplied "by others." But it is equally obvious that many factors bear on the value of collectible records--to name only a few, the popularity or aesthetic merit of the artist(s), the quality of a given performance, the rarity of the label, the number of copies originally pressed, issued, or sold--and they don't all necessarily apply in the same way, or with the same weight, to all records. In the new edition of APRG one discerns an especially high regard for certain labels--Blu-Disc, Vogue, Black Patti, and even more common varieties such as Paramount and Gennett--with little or no attention to the artist or selection. Willie Brown's Paramounts have doubled while the same titles on Champion remain the same. In other cases it's clear that what has risen is the artist's stock, regardless of company--e.g., Jimmie McCracklin, whose prices have gone up on all of the thirteen labels he is listed on.

In the case of the more esoteric items listed at hundreds of dollars, on labels that lasted maybe a week--and there are many, especially on 45-rpm--I doubt whether anyone has actually ever seen copies, let alone copies changing hands, in sufficient quantity to accurately assess their marketability at whatever price. Thus what we have, I suspect, are a lot of hunches and "informed guesses." But Docks is in a position to do that, and his hunches are probably as good as or better than anyone else's. Aside from the section on "Valuation of Records," Docks' introduction provides a useful, common-sensical compendium of information on record collecting--definitions of collector terminology, record grading, the care and feeding of 78s (especially Edisons), and more. Although this part of the book is probably most helpful to novice collectors, it's a valuable refresher course for old hands as well.



Docks is highly selective with be-boppers, personalities, and pre-1920 artists. He lists only seven Charlie Parker records and values them at \$5-8, which seems low. His Introduction says prices are for discs in excellent condition.

Typographically, the new edition is a definite improvement over its predecessors. The entire book has been reset, with price listings in a larger, more open typeface that is much easier on the eyes. The book's readability, and therefore its usefulness, has been further improved by the elimination of the annoying type "widows" which plagued earlier editions--i.e., an artist's name set alone at the bottom of a page with price listings for that artist continued on the next page, often an overleaf. In previous editions it was easy to get lost from section to section but now running heads on each page indicate the section as well as the artists included on that page. The 5th edition has, for the first time, a table of contents--but who ever looks at a table of contents for page numbers?

Many typographical errors have been corrected, but some have not. Mart Britt is still "Matt," and Okeh occasionally turns up as "Okey." There are also occasional slipups in indenting (or "outdenting") label names in a string of price listings, but this is minor. Crosby collectors will know that Brunswick 6140, listed as "At Your



Cash cut enough rockabilly to be placed in the guide's final section, "Rhythm & Blues; Rock & Roll; Rockabilly; Blues; etc." But shouldn't Roy Acuff and Eddy Arnold--also in that final section--be in the country section?



The new 5th edition lists this at \$30.00 - 40.00. Docks still gives Mart's name as "Matt."

Command," is actually "Million Dollar Baby" ("At Your Command" is on Br 6145). And unless you just happen to own Cameo 498, you probably won't notice that one side--Broadway Broadcasters' "Sobbin' Blues"--is listed at "5.00 - 8.00" (p. 94)--while the other side, "Mean Blues" by the Varsity Eight is valued at "7.00 - 10.00" (p. 207). Clearly a case of the old Gordian Knot Trick. Docks has corrected a similar instance, involving Victor 22684, that bedeviled earlier editions.

More normal folks may not enjoy reading the APRG from cover to cover as I do, but anyone interested in the current state of record collecting will find that it offers a broad overview of the subject, despite its occasional imperfections. Collectors with specialized interests in vintage jazz, rhythm & blues, country, and rock will want to own the new 5th edition, which, at \$24.95 (an increase of just \$2.00 over the previous edition), is a decided bargain.

NEW BOOK: Since Records Began

EMI: The First Hundred Years

By Peter Martland

Amadeus Press (ISBN 1-57467-033-6)

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

In telling the story of the corporation EMI, this book happens to give in its 359 pages an excellent account of the recording industry as a whole. If your interests are so wide that you enjoy both popular and classical music, if you listen to recordings of long ago and of recent decades, and if you want to know about company executives as well as musical giants, then this book belongs on your book shelf. If you are an Anglophile, then it belongs in a more prominent spot in the home, perhaps your coffee table. It is a big book, the right size for a coffee table.

It covers basics--musicians and executives who shaped the business, recording milestones, effects of world events on the industry--but also more. Readers who already understand the industry's evolution will love the rare visuals and attention to behind-the-scenes developments.

The book looks at how records were made, promoted, sold. It discusses how technical improvements changed the industry--the transition to electric recording, radio's impact, the LP revolution, the introduction of stereo, the CD's arrival. Business leaders profiled include Emile Berliner, Eldridge R. Johnson, Trevor Williams, Sir Joseph Lockwood, even Capitol co-founder Glenn E. Wallichs. Thumbnail biographies are supplied for important artists recorded by the company or issued by EMI due to licensing. The summaries here on executives and classical artists are especially well done--accurate, the right emphasis on the major achievements.

Although the emphasis on British artists is natural, the text and visuals establish that EMI's roster of artists was truly international. The text discusses opera stars of every background, key American jazz artists (available to EMI due to licensing agreements with American companies),

even French personalities such as Edith Piaf and Maurice Chevalier. Duplicated are the covers of record catalogs produced by the Gramophone Company's branches in India and Egypt. Here is an English company that never limited itself to London's music establishment.

The cover's flyleaf states, "The basis of this book, lavishly illustrated with a wealth of photographs, documents and recording memorabilia, is the previously untapped archive of EMI..." To cite one example of a rare visual, page 75 shows Luisa Tetrazzini giving a lunchtime concert at the Hayes factories (other photographs show that the Hayes complex was about as large as Victor's in Camden). The workers look a little bored, perhaps disappointed that it is Tetrazzini instead of Marie Lloyd or Harry Lauder.

Attractive HMV and Columbia record supplement covers are duplicated, and it is clear that British companies were as careful and creative in preparing art work for monthly supplements as was the Victor Talking Machine Company.

Only a few times does the book include visuals that I might call overly familiar, such as the photograph on page 31 of artist Francis Barraud sitting before an easel holding a Nipper painting. I suppose images of Barraud are rare and nothing else is so suitable. But why devote most of page 319 to the very familiar photograph that graces the Beatles' Abbey Road? And that same image is on page 311! Since he had the opportunity, I wish Martland had dipped deeper into the EMI archives for a photograph not so well-known, such as an alternative shot of the Beatles from that day's photo session. I will refer to the Beatles (and ex-Beatles) again later since I want to make clear that this book, unlike most books reviewed in V78, covers some post-1930 developments.

I sometimes say EMI when the Gramophone Company or the name of another company would be more precise. EMI was formed in 1931 when a few companies merged, notably the Gramophone Co. and the Columbia Graphophone Co., Ltd. The book discusses the beginnings of these companies, as indicated in the full title Since Records Began, EMI: The First Hundred Years. It is a problematic title because it suggests not only that EMI began a century ago (again, it was formed in 1931) but that "records began" only one hundred years ago (not so!). I admit it is a good title for marketing purposes.

The subtitle "The First Hundred Years" implies that EMI will exist for another century. Can EMI survive with the music industry changing so quickly? I suppose it will despite changes in ownership in the future. In 1979 it was acquired by Thorn Electrical Industries. Recent editions of the London Evening Standard have suggested the Canadian giant Seagram has tried to acquire EMI. Will EMI again be as prominent in the business as it was from the 1930s through the 1960s? That would be surprising.

The book looks at industry roots so it ends up covering much more than EMI. As page 22 puts it, "The most significant genealogical thread

leading to the formation of EMI can be traced to the towering figure of Emile Berliner...He was the initiator of the British venture that became the Gramophone Company Ltd, which later formed one-half of EMI." Thomas Edison is not overlooked. He is represented by an 1889 portrait by painter Abraham Archibald Anderson—a good choice, not commonly used.

Chapter 4 begins, "In June 1931, in the midst of the Depression, the shareholders of The Columbia Graphophone Company and the Gramophone Company approved proposals to merge and form a new venture, Electric and Musical Industries Ltd (EMI)." I am sorry that the formation date is given only as June 1931. Guy Marco's Encyclopedia of Recorded Sound in the United States is more specific, giving an incorporation date and citing a third company. It defines EMI as "A firm incorporated in Britain on 20 Apr 1931 through a merger of the Gramophone Co. (encompassing HMV and Zonophone records), the Columbia Graphophone Co., Ltd. (encompassing Columbia Parlophone, and Regal records), and the Marconiphone Co., Ltd. This amalgamation resulted in the world's largest recording organization."

I wish Martland had given details about the merger since I am intrigued by such cooperation among rival companies, something unthinkable in the U.S. with its anti-trust laws. Turning to journals of the time, I find a satisfying account of the merger in the May 1931 issue of Phonograph Monthly Review, which mentions voting trust certificates, the expected effect on trademarks, and the EMI-RCA relationship (RCA had a 27% interest in the new company).

The book's cover leaf states, "Over the past 100 years, the company has owned or been connected with almost every record label in the world, including Columbia, RCA Victor, Capitol, Liberty, Virgin, Angel, Imperial, MGM and Mercury." That EMI owned or was connected with "almost every record label" is exaggerated, of course. Whoever wrote this blurb must not know about the hundreds of obscure American labels—some formed in the 78 rpm era, others when the 45 rpm record



prevailed. I doubt that EMI acquired rights to Henry Burr and Fred Van Eps' short-lived Par-O-Ket label, for example. But it is clear that EMI had excellent connections with other major companies.

Remember the so-called British Invasion of the 1960s? What happened decades earlier could be called American Invasions. Martland's text and visuals indicate the influence of Americans in England. Page 84 duplicates a striking photograph of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band at the time of their London debut in 1919. Page 86 duplicates the cover of the "complete Catalogue of 'His Master's Voice' Dance Records," dated 1923, with Paul Whiteman and His Orchestra gracing the cover. Page 223 discusses how the release of American big band records in England combined with the presence in that country of American servicemen "helped re-define British popular music, moving it towards big band music, swing, be-bop and jive music." In England, a surprising number of transplanted Americans served as recording industry pioneers and executives, including Fred and William Gaisberg, William Sinkler Darby, Alfred Clark, William Barry Owen, Frank Dorian, and Louis Sterling.

Later chapters covering the rise of rock may not matter much to V78J readers. They might not even glance at Martland's discussion of the Beatles, but I am surprised by errors since the group was so important to EMI. He asserts that John Lennon and Yoko Ono "made many records, including 'The Ballad of John and Yoko' (Parlophone PAS 10004) in 1969." In fact, Lennon worked with Paul McCartney in the studio on April 14, the two relying on overdubbings, a unique instance of half the Beatles producing a hit without the other half (and certainly without Yoko's help). The summary of the Beatles' career on page 313 is weak. To call Rubber Soul "far more than a simple collection of hits" wrongly implies that most cuts were hits, but only "Nowhere Man" appeared on a 45 rpm single (it wasn't even a single in the U.K.--it was a hit single in the U.S. but was also dropped from the American lp version of Rubber Soul); no tracks from Sgt. Pepper were issued in 1967 on a 45 rpm



record, contrary to Martland's claim that the lp "spawned perhaps their greatest single"; that Abbey Road "proved a shadow of past glories" is nonsense; Martland is wrong to call "Free As A Bird" a Lennon single; and so on.

Otherwise I marvel that Martland covers so much so well though I should warn American readers that the book was written for a U.K. audience. Prices are given in pounds, not dollars. Page 126 states, "Turner Layton and Clarence Johnstone were Columbia's best-selling artists in the 78-rpm era," which makes sense only when you understand that this was written for U.K., not American, readers. When he says John Lennon's "Imagine" was released as a single in 1975, he means in England. This was four years after being a hit single in the U.S.!

I will also mention that this is an account of the industry flattering to EMI, not history told by a disinterested party. Martland's tone is too reverential at times. Frequently used adjectives are "spectacular," "remarkable," "extraordinary," and "exciting." Chapter Eight concludes with this glowing prediction better suited for advertising than a history: "With exciting new artists..., EMI Classics can today look forward to renewing its catalogue with recordings that will stand comparison with the finest made during the previous hundred years." Consider Martland's praise on page 299 for Paul

McCartney's Liverpool Oratorio, which earned mixed reviews from classical music critics: "This remarkable piece was a triumph for an artist whose versatility and talent have been demonstrated in an unparalleled career that has extended over four decades." This is cheerleading for an EMI artist.

Martland's tone strikes me as all the more fawning because I have also devoured Norman Lebrecht's Who Killed Classical Music? (1997, Birch Lane Press). Published in England under the less sensationalistic title When The Music Stops..., the book looks at EMI through a different lens. Consider how the two authors discuss the practice begun in 1931 of collecting money in advance for discs of previously unrecorded works. Martland stresses that these records-by-subscription featured "the finest available interpreters" (168) and that the society produced "many significant recording firsts" (170). Lebrecht, on the other hand, implies on page 299 of his book that EMI was not straight with the public about its subscription "gimmick," pointing to a "mysterious rush of one hundred and eleven subscriptions from Japan" (meaning what?).

Lebrecht cynically points out that the idea pitched by a young Walter Legge to collect money in advance appealed to EMI executives since it would "eliminate the financial risk from making records" (299). Lebrecht pulls no punches, calling Legge "probably the most disagreeable personage ever to intrude upon musical performance." Martland states about Legge, "[A]s a precociously creative being within an organization like EMI, he was at times difficult to manage" (193). Martland is rarely more critical than this. He does point out that EMI had "indefensible duplication" due to the HMV and Columbia labels under the EMI umbrella competing against each other, and he admits on page 258 that the early 1980s--just before the CD's arrival--was a time of "stagnation and decline."

Martland's text celebrates EMI's achievements, telling all from an EMI perspective. Lebrecht, examining various companies, is eager to stir controversy. If you can afford both, try to read one book after the other--an interesting reading experience! But get Martland's first. Such books go

out of print too quickly.

I can think of no other recording industry history covering so wide a span of time that is as beautiful. Few books are this attractive, period. EMI deserves a book so detailed and wonderfully illustrated. It reminds me that someone needs to write a history of RCA Victor. In 1991 General Electric published Fred Barnum's "His Master's Voice" In America, which is as attractive and hefty as Martland's EMI history and covers a few recording developments very well, but only part of Barnum's book is about the music industry. Martland does devote a page to the CAT scanner, developed by EMI, but his intended audience--unlike Barnum's--is anyone interested in the recording industry as it evolved in this century.

For readers interested in the industry from the beginning to modern times, this will provide hours of pleasurable reading.

For a postpaid copy send \$39.95 to Allen Koenigsberg at 502 E. 17th St., Brooklyn NY 11226. Fax is 718-941-1408. Phone is 718-941-6835.



For U.S. distribution of its records, EMI created in 1952 the Angel label (catalogs cite November 1953 for the first releases) and soon linked up with America's Capitol label, which had been affiliated with Britain's Decca label since 1948.

NEW CASSETTE: Two Minute Cylinders, Volume III

Produced by Larry Jeannette

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

Not much American popular music recorded before 1917 is available on compact disc. I say pre-1917 because Original Dixieland Jazz Band records have been reissued. When Pearl issued in 1993 the multi-volumed Music From The New York Stage: 1890-1920--a total of 12 CDs--I thought it would be the beginning of many early records being reissued. But today I look in vain for other CDs featuring the acoustic era vocalists whom I enjoy the most. Evidently not enough people will buy CDs of old records featuring popular music. Early opera records have met a much better fate.

My friend Martin Maas recently listed for me a few dozen CDs that reissue at least some American popular records made before 1917, and I detect two patterns. The CDs do not remain available for long, and most companies that reissue early American popular records are non-American. Say-Disc, Opal, and Pearl are British. Timeless is Dutch. Document is Austrian. An exception is Crystal Records of Camas, Washington, which issued in 1996 a superb Herbert L. Clarke CD (CD450) and in recent months an outstanding Arthur Pryor CD (CD451). This latter CD, by the way, features 26 titles and is not the same as Crystal's Pryor album (LP S451) of the early 1980s.

I suspect no compact disc company will soon reissue Lambert cylinders of nearly a century ago. Since Larry Jeannette has done a superb job transferring to cassette 39 elusive cylinders--10 Lamberts, various brown wax Columbia and Edisons, some early black wax--I am happy to inform V78 readers of its availability. Jeannette operates P & L Antiques and Collectibles and has made available other cassettes, most containing music never reissued in any format, certainly not on CD. This particular cassette, the third volume in a cylinder series, features such rare recordings that I am happy to review it here.

What impresses me most about this tape of

39 selections is how well it covers the popular genres of 1898 to 1903. Here are ballads, comic monologues, military band performances, "coon" songs, banjo solos. The artists on the tape are ones who recorded regularly at the time, including Gilmore's Band, Cal Stewart, Steve Porter, John Bieling, Sousa's Band, Harry Macdonough, Vess L. Ossman, and J.W. Meyers.

Not all numbers will be to everyone's liking. Some selections here I hope to hear never again, such as the Nicholas Scholl trombone piece, the Frank Mazziota flute performance of "Old Folks At Home," and the comic monologues delivered here by Cal Stewart's Uncle Josh, Jim White's Michael Casey, and Frank Kennedy's Schultz. But the tape would not represent the era so well if such selections had been excluded.

I am impressed by the sound quality and attention to proper speeds, the right equipment clearly used for playing the cylinders. The tape's chief strength is that one hears, in 90 minutes, the basic range of material offered at the turn of the century. It was not a wide range. The tape would perfectly represent what was available from 1898 to 1903 if at least one Arthur Collins and one Len Spencer performance had been included, perhaps also one of George J. Gaskin, of Billy Golden, and of Dan W. Quinn (there are three Jim White performances here--two too many). Actually, Collins is heard as announcer for banjoist Ruby Brooks.

I am not surprised that no female performers are on the tape. Some recorded this early but male artists dominated. At this time companies were frank about technology not doing justice to female singers. When records were issued of pioneers such as Minnie Emmett and Corinne Morgan, trade publications stressed that finally the female voice had been successfully recorded. Trade publications routinely exaggerated, so I interpret this to mean that attempts were at least being made to capture the female voice--how successfully

may be debated. The June 1903 issue of Edison Phonograph Monthly states, "It has always been a difficult matter to make successful Records of female voices, and after months of careful experimentation our Record Department has succeeded in getting perfect results in quartets and duets. It is now at work on solos, and expects before long to list some very good songs by female voices." The time was almost ripe for Ada Jones.

I find fascinating the performance on Lambert 518 of "Hello Central, Give Me Heaven" as sung by Steve Porter and what seems at first to be a boy soprano. In the song's announcement (all selections are announced), Porter identifies his partner as "Master Hogan in the gallery." Porter opens with the verse about "a little child" (gender not specified) deciding to use a phone to contact a deceased mother. Then the high-voiced "Hogan" sings the familiar chorus, Porter joining when the chorus is repeated. "Hogan" on Lambert 518 must be John Bieling, who had performed with Porter on Lambert 517, which is "Sweet Genevieve," also on the tape. Bieling, teamed again with Porter, uses this high register singing the Charles K. Harris song on Victor Monarch 1069. (Quentin Riggs met Bieling in 1947 and wrote to me in a recent letter, "I wonder how many people alive today can say that they heard John Bieling sing in person.")

The song "Hello Central, Give Me Heaven" was published in 1901 and I doubt I will hear any version recorded closer to the song's publication date than Lambert 518. Porter, who cut it a few times in 1901, was the recording artist most associated with the song in its first year. Byron G. Harlan then became associated with it, recording it for most companies and cutting new takes as late as 1913 for Victor.

"Carry Me Back To Old Virginny," sung here by the Edison Male Quartet on Edison 2237, reminds me that on February 17, 1997, Virginia's House of Delegates voted 100 to 0 to retire this song as Virginia's official or state song. Written by black composer James A. Bland and published in 1878, it is about an ex-slave--an "old darkey"--eager to return to Virginia to die, evidently for no

other reason than because he (she?) was born there. He most yearns for the afterlife, not Virginia. Never extolling the state's beauty, he says he hopes his life will end by the familiar "old Dismal Swamp." That he had known unhappy times in Virginia is suggested by the second verse, in which he states that only when he meets "massa and missis...on that bright and golden shore"--that is, in heaven--will they be "happy and free from all sorrow." That second verse concludes, "There's where we'll meet and we'll never part no more." The ex-slave wants to be united in a permanent way with "massa and missis," not with a spouse, not with parents. It is an odd notion of heaven. How did this remain a state song as late as 1997?

I wish controversy had been generated about the song when Virginia's delegates voted. A national debate about "Carry Me Back To Old Virginny" might have increased the value of my extra copies of Victor 74420, the Alma Gluck version. Gluck sings both verses. The second verse is skipped on this cylinder version despite time for its inclusion. Instead, the first verse is sung three times, a monotonous arrangement.

SONGS BY STEVE PORTER.



Mr. Steve Porter is a valuable acquisition to the staff of Columbia Entertainers. He is possessed of a rich baritone voice. His records are loud, clear and distinct.

- 4502 I Love to See My Poor Old Mother Work.
- 4504 Bell Buoy.
- 4506 Because He Was Old and Gray.
- 4507 Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep.
- 4508 The Palms.
- 4509 Mamie Reilly.
- 4511 Whisper Your Mother's Name.
- 4513 As Your Hair Grows Whiter.
- 4514 Don't Mention Her Name.
- 4515 I Love You in the Same Old Way.
- 4517 Lucky Jim.
- 4519 Take Back Your Gold.
- 4522 The Crimson Chain.
- 4524 Don't Send Her Away.
- 4527 Just Behind the Times.
- 4533 She Lives On the Same Street With Me.
- 4536 The Harp That Once Thro' Tara's Hall.
- 4537 A Warrior Bold.
- 4538 Toreador's Song.
- 4539 Send Back the Picture and the Ring.
- 4540 Sweetest Little Girl in Town.
- 4543 In the Baggage Coach Ahead.

Time constraints prevent second verses of songs from being sung on most early cylinders. It is true for "Hello Central, Give Me Heaven," which is a pity since the second verse about a phone operator giving comfort by speaking as the deceased mother advances the song's narrative. On the tape is Dresser's "On The Banks of the Wabash, Far Away" (Columbia 8410), sung by Frank C. Stanley and Byron G. Harlan. Its second verse about a girl who is "sleeping" in the churchyard--many were dead in popular songs a century ago--is omitted. Because its verses are about dear ones who died too soon, I am moved when hearing the song performed by Stanley, who died too soon.

Months ago I thought of Stanley's premature death only in terms of the industry--the loss to record companies, to his singing partners. Now I consider how that death affected his family. Anita Taylor of Middletown, New York recently contacted me after seeing my Internet homepage. Informing me that Stanley (his real name was William Grinstead) was her grandfather, she stated, "The loss of the husband-wage earner in those days often left the family devoid of income, and so it was in this case. The money had come easily to a famous singer, but had gone just as quickly."

Another Dresser song on the tape is "The Blue and the Grey" (Columbia 9071). It is about a mother who lost two sons in the Civil War (Appomattox and Chickamauga) and four decades later lost a third son in Cuba ("a trench in Santiago") during the Spanish-American war. The lyrics should bring tears to the eyes but I scratch my head and wonder about the odds of this happening. It was published in 1900, two years after the Santiago battle, and again we hear a recording made soon after a song's publication.

"Ain't That A Shame," with words by the prolific John Queen and music by Walter Wilson, is sung by Will F. Denny on Edison 7875 at a pace that allows for two verses and two rounds of the chorus. Denny was a more imaginative singer than most of his generation, or at least he worked harder at injecting variety into performances. When singing the chorus a second time, Denny

yodels as he implores, "Won't you open that door?" He ends the song by speaking the words, "Open that door--let me in, honey, will ya?" Such an impromptu ending was atypical for this early period. I have never heard Denny give a routine performance. In contrast to Denny is the predictable George W. Johnson, whose "Laughing Coon" (Columbia 7603) is on this tape. It sounds much like his many records of the "Laughing Song"

"A Coon Band Contest" is played by Sousa's Band on Columbia 5381. If the title hints at some drama played out in the song--different bands having a contest?--I never hear it in performances, certainly not when Vess Ossman plays it as a banjo solo. When "A Coon Band Contest" was later issued on Edison Standard 10128, the March 1909 issue of Edison Phonograph Monthly gave this unconvincing analysis: "It features a contest between several members of the band, each playing a different air. The trombone wins." I have heard of contests between bands but never within bands.

At ragtime festivals, scholar Ed Berlin has played a tape of the early Sousa performance to illustrate not only that ragtime at the century's turn was commonly performed by bands but that trombone smears were considered a trait of black bands. Certainly the trombone is prominent on Columbia 5381. (Is Pryor's "Trombone Sneeze" on Edison 8032, issued in 1902, similar?) I love Earl Fuller's 1917 "jass" version of "Coon Band Contest" and would enjoy hearing a contemporary interpretation of "Coon Band Contest" but whereas modern performances of Sousa numbers are easy to find, my local Tower Records has no CD with a Pryor composition. That bands today avoid the ill-named "Coon Band Contest" is understandable (they could call it "Band Contest") but why is "The Whistler and His Dog" not easy to find on CD?

The 1902 song "Sammy" was performed by Lotta Faust in the show The Wizard of Oz and is sung on the tape by Harry Macdonough (Lambert 855), who also sings on the cassette the Arthur Gillespie-Herbert Dillea standard "Absence Makes The Heart Grow Fonder" (Edison 7870--sentiments

expressed are close to those of "Ain't That A Shame"! It is fitting that the prolific artist is represented twice on the tape. When you listen to "Sammy," try to remember that this singer became one of the most influential executives in the industry by the 1920s. It is hard to do! And try to forget that this is a song meant for a female singer ("That's the very sort of fellow I'm in love with...").

Known as John, or "Jack," Macdonald to industry insiders, he was in charge of Victor's New York recording studios from around 1910 until 1920, was Victor's Sales Manager in the early 1920s, and succeeded Calvin G. Child as manager of Victor artists and repertoire in October 1923. Olive Kline recalled in later years that Macdonough hired her after hearing her sing in a church. H.O. Brunn reports in his history of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band that it was Macdonough—that is, Macdonald—who insisted that a saxophonist record with the band, that Al Bernard sing refrains, that "Fidgety Feet" be the title for one ODJB number and "Lasses Candy" for another. Macdonald was influential in unexpected ways.

In October 1925, Macdonald left Victor to become Columbia's Director of Recording Studios, guiding artists through the company's early Viva-Tonal years. An article titled "J.S. MacDonald Is Feted By Associates" in the July 1929 issue of Talking Machine World indicates how highly respected he was in the industry: "On June 3, Keene's Old English Chop House, New York City, was the scene of a Bon Voyage dinner and entertainment given to J.S. MacDonald, recording director of the Columbia Phonograph Co., by a group of his associates....The merriment was ably handled by such well-known stage and recording stars as Ruth Etting, Eddie Walters, Charles W. Hamp, Ethel Waters, and Mary Dixon—all exclusive Columbia artists. Among the other mirth-provokers were Mamie Smith, one of the first 'blues' singers ..." Can you envision Mamie Smith belting out blues to Harry Macdonough?

Records on this cassette are nearly a century old. I have never met anyone who plays Lambert or brown wax cylinders for the pure joy of listening. Yes, outstanding musicians perform on old cylinders, but does the technology do justice to what was happening in the studio? I do not think so although clean cylinders on the right equipment deliver a sound that no early discs match.

Such records are valuable because they open a window into an era. They allow us to hear how memorable songs were interpreted long ago; they help us understand how the industry got on its feet and how some artists who would record for many years began their careers. For pure listening pleasure, I will play a Harry Macdonough disc of the 'teens or a Vess Ossman Diamond Disc before I will play their cylinders of 1900. But since I study records of a century ago for various reasons, I find it convenient to have so many performances on one 90-minute tape. This is as well produced as any tape featuring such old music can be. I wish these performances were also on CD.

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NEW CD: Tiny Parham 1928-1930

Timeless CBC 1-022

Reviewed by Frank M. Young

Sinuous, haunting minor-keyed melodies, compact, effective arrangements and unique instrumentation permeate the Victor recordings of Tiny Parham and His Musicians.

At their best, Parham's compositions deftly blend blues, jazz and pop stylings, flavored with atmospheric vaudevillian vamping and a distinct tinge of Depression-era "world music." Parham's music often suggests an unlikely blend of Duke Ellington and Jelly Roll Morton, with a dash of Don Redman for good measure.

Like Ellington, Parham favored unusual themes and melodies. Like Morton and Redman, he crafted superb arrangements that gave his sidemen generous solo and ensemble space (if little room for improvisation). Parham never wrote anything as inscrutable and subtle as Ellington's "Mystery Song" or "Rude Interlude." He's closer to Morton as a composer. His work also suggests Leroy Shield's charming scores for Hal Roach's early '30s comedy films. Parham's tunes, like Shield's, capture their era's essence. What might be musical clichés in others' hands are ingredients in intense, atmospheric, inventive music.

Parham carved a niche for himself as an assayer of Depression-age exotica. Titles such as "The Head Hunter's Dream," "Voodoo," "Jungle Crawl" and "Bombay" suggest that we're not about to hear another re-hash of stock blues themes, blandly arranged for our dancing pleasure.

Perhaps these recordings were too eclectic, and not danceable enough, for Depression audiences. Though Victor released several Parham discs, some in the now-prized V-38000 series, they were not big sellers and are quite rare.

This is music worth rescuing from oblivion. Recorded between July, 1928 and November, 1930, the 50 tracks on this two-disc set (12 of them alternate takes) show the development of a remarkable jazz composer and arranger. Par-

ham's use of brass bass, for example, is unusual for late '20s jazz. His charts transformed the instrument from dull time-keeper to a sprightly, upfront presence in the orchestra. Bassists Quinn Wilson and future be-bopper Milt Hinton bring color and atmosphere to these recordings.

Another prime member of the Parham ensemble is violinist Elliot Washington, who first appears on a February, 1929 session. His presence is strongly felt on the haunting "Voodoo" and the excellent, up-tempo "Skag-a-Lag." Washington's expressive playing, full of piercing vibrato and showy bravado, foreshadows Ellington sideman Ray Nance's work of the early '40s.

Parham's first few Victor sessions produced a number of Duke-like, fast-paced tunes ("Jogo Rhythm," "Snake Eyes," "Stompin' On Down"), mingled with more ambitious mood-pieces ("Stuttering Blues," "Head Hunter's Dream"). By 1929's end, Parham was reaching his apex as a composer. His Musicians embraced these more complex tunes and arrangements, playing them with fire and finesse.

Parham's 1929-30 recordings, including "Bombay," "Golden Lily," "Steel String Blues," "Cathedral Blues," "Sud Buster's Dream," "Rock Bottom" and "Black Cat Moan," are masterpieces.

"Rock Bottom" has a supremely haunting aura of gloom, relieved by a delicately harmonized second strain. Its lazy pace perfectly suits the melody's pensive mood. Ray Hobson's growling, penetrating cornet makes the record's first chorus one of the most affecting in all of recorded jazz. In beautiful contrast is the liquid, relaxed tone of trombonist Ike Covington. The alternate take of this number is particularly good.

"Steel String Blues," driven by Mike McKendrick's laconic guitar and Ernie Marrero's insistent bass drum, is a dreamy, drowsy toe-tapper. Though it hews to a tried-and-true blues progres-

sion, this simple piece is a gem of easygoing ensemble playing. Parham's piano playing shines on this tune.

"Bombay" is a delightful piece of cartoon travelogue. Its main theme is built around a time-tested chord progression, later used in the '40s standard "Besame Mucho" and in the iconic "James Bond Theme" of the early '60s. Washington's violin, and the reedman (probably Dalbert Bright), play well off Covington's trombone and Punch Miller's cornet. "Bombay" inspires images from early '30s animated cartoons. Like those films, it has a disarming charm.

"Cathedral Blues" opens in a tender, reflective mood, giving a nod to the spiritual suggestion of the title. It segues into an easygoing blues, with soulful, slurred cornet, followed by clarinet and muted trombone. Parham switches from piano to celeste for a delightful, eerie solo chorus, with the other leads, plus brass bass, playing ethereal chords in support. Miller rides the piece out with a laid-back final chorus, supplemented by Washington. The piece ends as it began. "Cathedral Blues" is a true showpiece for the entire band. Members play as a tight-knit ensemble, lead and backup players achieving a smooth wash of sound.

"Black Cat Moan" masterfully manipulates slack and tension. A queasy cascade of descending notes begins the piece, giving way to a chorus of slinky, chromatic blues. The lead is traded from saxophone to cornet to guitar, the rhythm section providing a strong anchor. Washington's violin returns to the woozy main theme, bolstered by Parham and Wilson. Brass bass deftly revives the blues theme, with violin playing an acrobatic counter-melody. A brief coda, led by Washington, eerily recaps the opening theme. "Black Cat Moan" possesses the listener with its skulking, sensual mood. It's unlike any other jazz recording.

These recordings have been previously issued on CD, in the Classics series (661 and 691), but this is a superior set. It is part of an ongoing series, initiated by British jazz musician Chris Barber, to preserve the work of pioneering jazz artists

who made discs. Barber has picked his subjects and colleagues well. John R.T. Davies does his usual superlative job of digital re-mastering, and Brian Rust contributes a brief biography of Parham, so well-written the reader hungers for more information and insight. Wim van Eyle's discography, though lacking the original Victor release numbers, gives the listener an exacting guide to who did what on Parham's recordings.

If Parham's songs aren't half as well-known as "The Pearls" or "Mood Indigo," neither have they completely faded into obscurity. Ted Des Plantes as well as The New Jazz Wizards have recorded tribute albums of Parham's music. The Wizards' Golden Lily--The Music of "Tiny" Parham is available as Stomp Off CD 1281.

Tiny Parham's recordings, which epitomize the volatile, daring flavor of jazz in the 1920s, should be a part of every jazz lover's library. His contribution to American music, though small in comparison to Ellington's or Morton's, is substantial. It is reassuring to know these pieces have been so lovingly and thoughtfully preserved.

The 2-CD set is available from Worlds Records, P.O. Box 1922, Novato CA (800-742-6663).



Recorded in Chicago on November 4, 1930.

NEW BOOK: Last Cavalier:

The Life and Times of John A. Lomax, 1867-1948

By Nolan Porterfield

University of Illinois Press (ISBN 0-252-02216-5)

Reviewed by Tim Gracyk

Defining John Lomax's chief claim to fame is not easy, not even as one reads the 580-page Last Cavalier: The Life and Times of John A. Lomax, a definitive biography of the folklorist. Some may conclude that he should be best remembered for Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads, which generated widespread interest in cowboy songs when published in 1910. Or arguably his greatest achievement was in gathering black folk songs and publishing American Ballads and Folk Songs as well as Negro Folk Songs as Sung by Leadbelly, in the process making Leadbelly's name known. Folk music enthusiasts might say other books by Lomax (written with others) are his chief contributions, especially Our Singing Country. Or perhaps his great gift to his field was in training others, notably son Alan Lomax, who is often called the most important American folklorist of this century. Lomax also started the University of Texas alumni association and was head of the Library of Congress's Archive of Folk Song—not as important as other achievements but noteworthy.

His name brings to my mind a prototype—that of a folklorist making records at the very sites where folk music evolved and was performed regularly. I view Lomax's records as the first significant field recordings made by an American. Others with cruder equipment preceded Lomax in going "into the field," as early as the 1890s when anthropologists Jesse Walter Fawkes and Frances Densmore used Edison cylinders to record Native American songs. Robert W. Gordon, first head of the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress, used cylinders to make field recordings in the 1920s, as did Howard W. Odum and possibly Lawrence Gellert. Perhaps their field recordings were significant, but has anyone heard them, studied them? Not even Robert Gordon's

biographer Debora Kodish makes the case that Gordon's cylinders had much of an impact on musicologists. Songs that Lomax recorded would.

I have seen "field recordings" also used for important records made at sessions in the 1920s supervised by Ralph Peer, Polk Brockman, and others, but it seems a misnomer. Talking Machine World, which referred often to the activities of Peer and Brockman in the South, used a different term, "recording expeditions." These A & R men set up equipment in city hotels and advertised for local and not-so-local artists to show up. Auditions were held, appointments were made for sessions, and songs were modified so they would sell better. Ralph Peer urged some artists to rework familiar songs so new copyrights could be taken out.



A rare instance of Lomax's name on a 78 rpm label. Leadbelly sang "Irene" in July 1933 when Lomax first recorded him in prison. Lomax didn't really co-write it. The song has a complex history.

Lomax worked differently. I don't know that he made recordings literally in fields but he came close to it, hauling cylinder equipment (Dictaphone, not Edison as a few books have reported) and then disc equipment (by 1939 he used a Presto machine) to musicians, in contrast to A & R men setting up machines in hotels. Charles Wolfe and Kip Lornell's The Life and Legend of Leadbelly (HarperCollins, 1992) includes a memorable photograph of the trunk of Lomax's car stuffed with equipment, and page 267 of Lawrence Cohn's Nothing But The Blues (Abbeville, 1993) shows a more elaborate setup requiring the car's rear.

Lomax writes in his autobiography Adventures of a Ballad Hunter (Macmillan, 1947) of transporting, in earlier years, a 50-pound cylinder machine on horseback, but his modern day biographer, Nolan Porterfield, points out that Lomax's letters from that period do not mention such equipment on the trip in question, and the passage is not wholly credible. A footnote on page 506 of the new biography does establish that Lomax used cylinder technology to preserve songs as early as September 1909 but it is not clear that he took machines into the field this early. Lomax gathered cowboy songs in various ways, but making field recordings was evidently not crucial.

To gather black folk songs in the early 1930s, Lomax felt recording technology was essential and specially ordered a machine, relying on Library of Congress funding. Its maker, Walter C. Garwick, promised something light for traveling but produced a machine over 300 pounds. Lomax was over 60 years old, and his willingness to drive with heavy technology to remote locations is remarkable, especially given the equipment's temperamental nature. Seeking musicians who would have been considered too crude for vaudeville or recording studios—he especially wanted to record black musicians who had been segregated from whites and were unfamiliar with radio, dance halls, and jazz—Lomax struck gold visiting penitentiaries and prison farms. Inside prison fences, Lomax believed, were black folk songs in their purest form, least contaminated by commercial influences.

Songs of the Cow Puncher

A Lecture by

Prof. John A. Lomax

Of The University of Texas

Describing the growth and development of the cowboy songs and frontier ballads, with examples of the verses. An account of the wild life on the trail where these ballads had their origin. A breath of the breezy West of yesterday, from which the poetry and romance of the frontier is rapidly passing.

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We can hear on Rounder CDs (1044, 1045) recordings made by Lomax in Angola Penitentiary of Huddie Leadbelly singing "Irene" and other gems, or at least the notes of Rounder 1044 claim that the CD "concentrates on [Leadbelly's] earliest Library of Congress performances." Recordings of 1933 seem to be mixed with cuts from 1935, nothing clearly identified. During the earliest recording of "Green Corn," cut in early 1935 in Connecticut, we hear a voice (not a young man's—John Lomax?) ask Leadbelly three times, "What is green corn?" These were not recordings to be placed on any market.

This Lomax biography reminds me that much American popular music was ignored by record companies. Lomax wanted what companies did not—performances that were raw, primitive, and rough. If music was delivered in an unpolished manner, Lomax was more ready to accept it as authentic folk music. It seems nothing on records issued by companies interested this folklorist. Did Lomax appreciate or even knew about discs issued in the 1920s of Fiddlin' Cowan Powers, Eck Robertson, and similar artists? True, these were fid-

dlers, and Lomax specialized in cowboy songs and black folk songs. But in the 1920s Gennett, Okeh, Victor and others issued performances with strong ties to nineteenth-century music, and Lomax could have found much worth studying.

On the other hand, Charles Wolfe's new book The Devil's Box: Masters of Southern Fiddling (Country Music Foundation Press, 1997) indicates that fiddlers of the 1920s had to compromise if they wished to record often. Wolfe states on page 4, "Many...only made two to four recordings, unable or unwilling to make the changes the record company executives wanted in the rapidly developing work of commercial old-time music." Whether Lomax sensed this was happening or not, he had no enthusiasm for records issued by companies. This folklorist wanted to hear music coming from people—not records, not talking machines, not songs reworked to please A & R men. But he wanted equipment to preserve his kind of music when he found it.

Lomax might have avoided some legal tan-

gles had he not been indifferent towards the song-writing industry. When his American Ballads and Folk Songs was published in 1934, a music publisher threatened to sue over Lomax's inclusion of "Zeb Turney's Gal" as a folk song—Carson Robison copyrighted it in 1926, and Vernon Dalhart recorded it several times. Lomax averted the lawsuit by dropping the song from the book's second printing. It is almost understandable that Lomax did not know this was a commercial number. Why didn't Macmillan editors catch this? "Zeb Turney's Gal" sold well but obviously not to those in New York's publishing business.

Lomax was not influenced by the record industry, and the industry was relatively free of Lomax's influence for most of his life. Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads sold steadily after being published in 1910, so I am surprised that cowboy songs were not recorded sooner. The earliest disc of cowboy songs may be Bentley Ball's "The Dying Cowboy" coupled with "Jesse James," issued on Columbia A3085 in September 1919 as part of a pioneering "Song-a-logue of America" educational series. Nothing is known of Ball but he wasn't a cowboy singer—he recorded Indian songs, spirituals, even "Scotch folk songs." If Lomax had not rescued the two songs by printing them in Cowboy Songs, Ball probably would not have known the tunes. In mid-1924 Okeh artist Charles Nabell was possibly the first recording artist with a cowboy voice to sing of cowboys—nothing is known of Nabell.

I believe Victor issued only two cowboy songs in the acoustic era. Wilfred Glenn and the Shannon Quartet sing "Whoopee Ti Yi Yo" on Victor 19059—these singers were no cowboys! Victor's supplement for July 1923 calls the number "educational" and "a genuine cowboy song, such as few Americans ever have heard of, much less heard." Royal Dadmun—again, no cowboy—sings "Rounded Up in Glory," subtitled "A Cowboy Spiritual," on Victor 45387. Early Victor catalogs do use the term "cowboy song" for such Tin Pan Alley fare as "Denver Town" and "Cheyenne."

In 1925 Carl Sprague, a Texan like Lomax,



Did Sprague know Lomax's 1910 anthology? A 1975 book by John I. White, who recorded cowboy songs in the late '20s, praises Lomax for rescuing "old-time cowboy songs from oblivion."



Lomax used a Dictaphone to make field recordings in the early '30s, then switched to discs.

had a hit with "When The Work's All Done This Fall" on Victor 19747. It did not exactly inspire a craze but from this time onwards cowboy songs were recorded somewhat regularly, with pioneers including Vernon Dalhart, Jules Allen, John White, and Harry McClintock. Recordings of cowboy songs by artists of this era are included in volumes 1 and 2 of the 1996 CD series When I Was A Cowboy (Yazoo 2022-2023--Dalhart and Nabell are inexplicably left out). It is more likely that Sprague knew Lomax's cowboy song anthology than Lomax knew Sprague's hit record.

Though it turned out to be no folk song (it had appeared in print in 1873), Lomax saved "Home on the Range" from obscurity. I marvel that no record company seems to have touched it prior to Vernon Dalhart cutting it in April 1927 as "A Home on the Range" (Brunswick 137). Dalhart had once been a cowboy in Texas, and I feel his recordings of over a dozen cowboy songs have an authenticity that some others' records lack. Then Jules Allen recorded it for Victor in El Paso, Texas on April 24, 1928 (Victor 21627). Soon others recorded it, many more sang it on radio, and by the 1930s the song was known to all Americans.

On page 153 Porterfield writes, "The ulti-

mate value of Cowboy Songs [and Other Frontier Ballads] is measured...in those lovely, sad, and funny bits of tune and line now embedded in our lives: 'Whoopee Ti Yi Yo, Get Along, Little Dogies,' 'The Old Chisholm Trail,' 'Jesse James,' 'Sweet Betsy from Pike,' and of course, 'Home on the Range,' among dozens of other American favorites which Lomax saved from doom or otherwise helped preserve and popularize." While not all were "folk" songs as Lomax had believed, I agree that Lomax deserves much credit for making them available in a book, thereby saving the songs. But I sadly suspect that these songs are no longer "embedded" in the lives of Americans, not in the 1990s. To find someone under 40 who recognizes any of these titles aside from "Home on the Range" would be difficult.

Given his indifference towards commercial records, it is almost surprising that Lomax signed a contract in early 1935 with the American Record Company as Leadbelly's agent, but he was clearly happy to supply to a company his kind of singer. The early Leadbelly records sold poorly, however, partly because the company marketed him to black audiences as a blues singer. ARC should have followed the example of Lomax, who on the lecture circuit introduced, to white audiences, Leadbelly as a folk singer.

Porterfield reports on page 77 that Lomax viewed such groups as the Golden Gate Quartet and Fisk Jubilee Singers as too polished, and again on page 421 the biographer says Lomax was appalled by "phoney" groups such as the Golden Gate. What did Lomax think of Leadbelly's RCA Victor records made with the Golden Gate Quartet? Here is folk material but the delivery is slick--not too slick, in my opinion. Perhaps Lomax was incapable of an objective assessment. About radio performances around this time, page 421 states that Lomax deemed Leadbelly's voice "a sad echo of its former majesty," yet many Leadbelly records of this period are excellent.

This biography is superbly documented. Among other published sources, Porterfield quotes from Lomax's books, shows where Lomax's auto-

biography Adventures of a Ballad Hunter is less than accurate or too self-serving, and helps readers understand conditions under which this folklorist wrote those books. Porterfield's presentation of previously unpublished material is especially welcome, the Lomax papers deposited at the University of Texas proving invaluable for our understanding of the folklorist. Lomax left enough for Porterfield to show all the struggles and triumphs of that eventful life. Porterfield places events in context, giving helpful background information on Lomax's associates, explaining who was doing similar work and why Lomax was different.

This biography is a solid starting place for anyone interested in how folk songs early in this century were viewed, studied, collected. I wish it had been around when I first tried to read about the beginning of America's folk music movement. I must have picked the wrong books because I quickly gave up, put off by various authors' leftist rhetoric. This book, on the other hand, is free of tendentious prose and rich in documented facts and sensible analysis (incidentally, many passages will also interest students of Texas history).

If some early chapters drag a bit, it is not the biographer's fault since Lomax, born in 1867,

was over 40 when he made his first significant contribution as a folklorist, which was the publication of his cowboy anthology. Then two decades passed before he began his trip through the South with a recording machine in his car. Lomax was not idle in between, but even he devoted only a paragraph in his autobiography to the years between 1911 and 1917. For long periods Lomax was preoccupied with supplying for his family during hard times, unable to do the field work at which he excelled.

From Chapter 18 onwards, readers will marvel that this man nearing the age of 70 traveled so many miles, collected so many folk songs, and worked so tirelessly to inform the public about the importance of such songs. His earlier struggles—his years as registrar of the University of Texas and battles involving the presidency of the University of Texas—seem inconsequential as readers follow Lomax late in life.

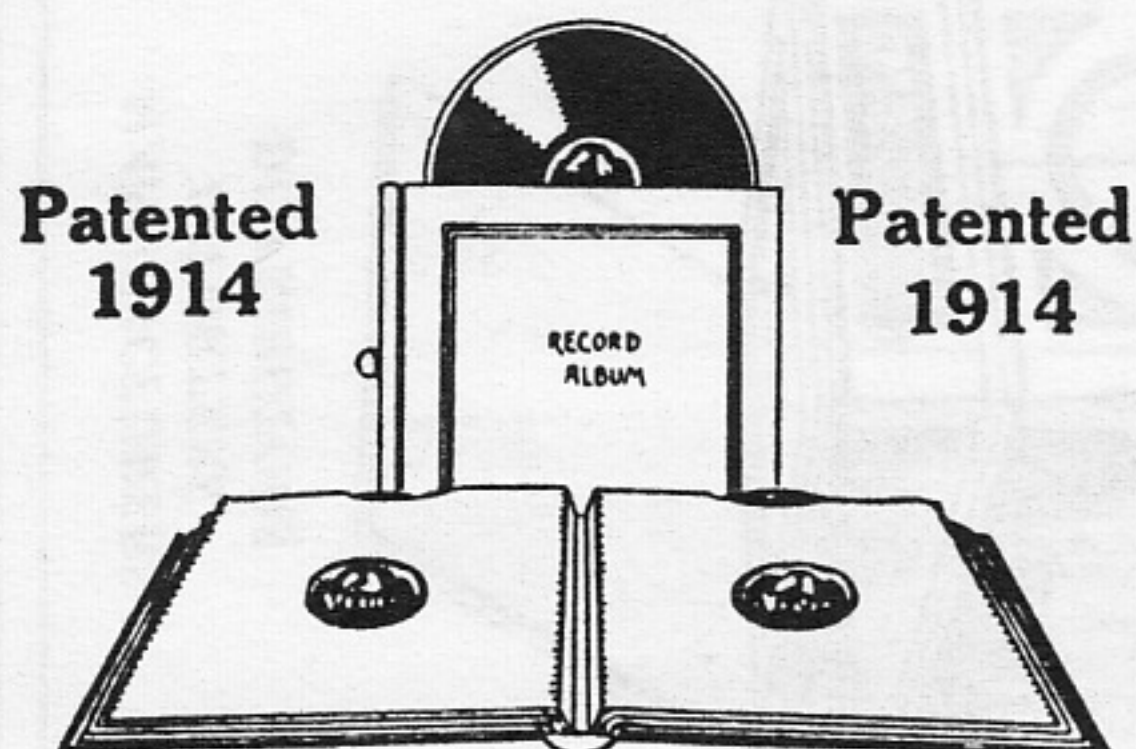
This biography builds in a way that many biographies do not—let's say those of Ernest Hemingway and Irving Berlin, to pick two Americans who achieved great things fairly early in life and whose lives and work, I feel, were less interesting as time went on. I suspect Lomax would prefer being compared to Hemingway than to the Tin Pan Alley genius. Porterfield quotes on page 351 a letter of January 1935 in which Lomax states to his wife that he felt, with Leadbelly's impact in New York, he was earning "a permanent and honorable place in the history of American literature." Porterfield adds that this, "in one form or another, had been his goal for years."

Through folk music, Lomax worked to make his mark on American literature. It was an unorthodox way to do it but in some ways Lomax was a more conventional man of letters than, say, Hemingway, who stayed away from Modern Languages Association conventions, attended mostly by English professors. Lomax lectured often at MLA conventions. I have attended some recent MLA conventions, and I give credit to Porterfield for doing what I thought no author could do: he makes MLA meetings sound interesting!



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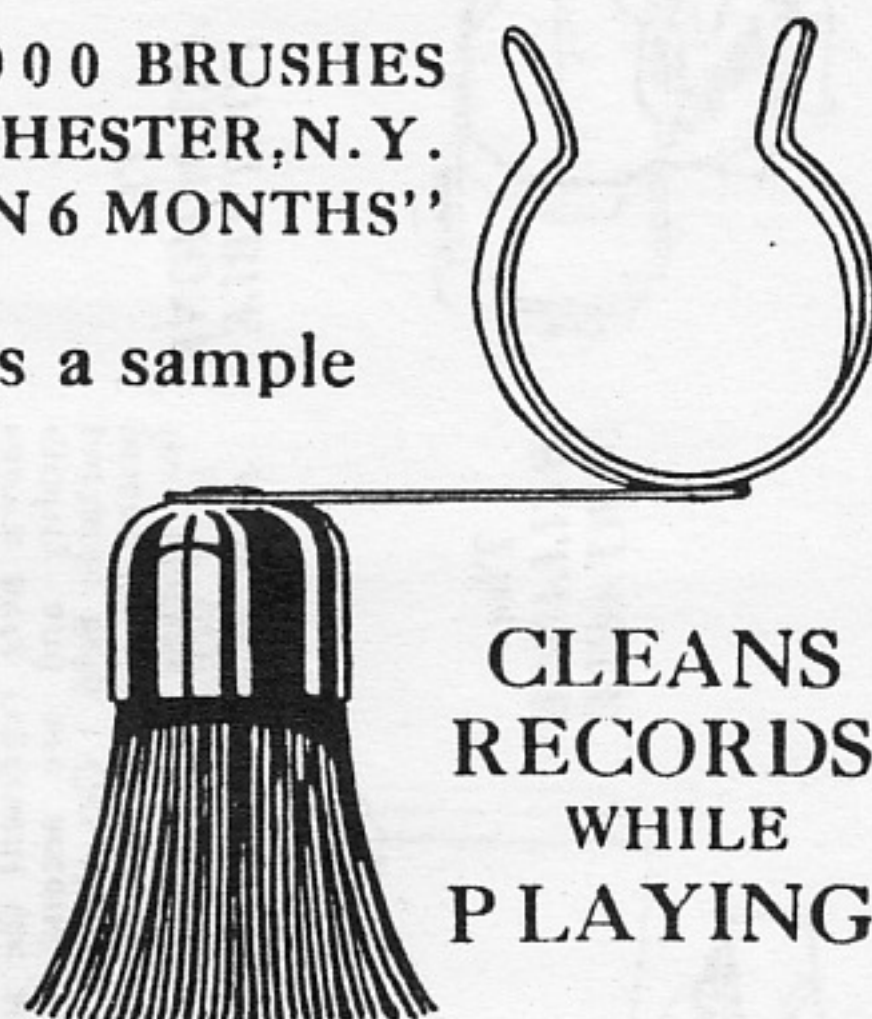
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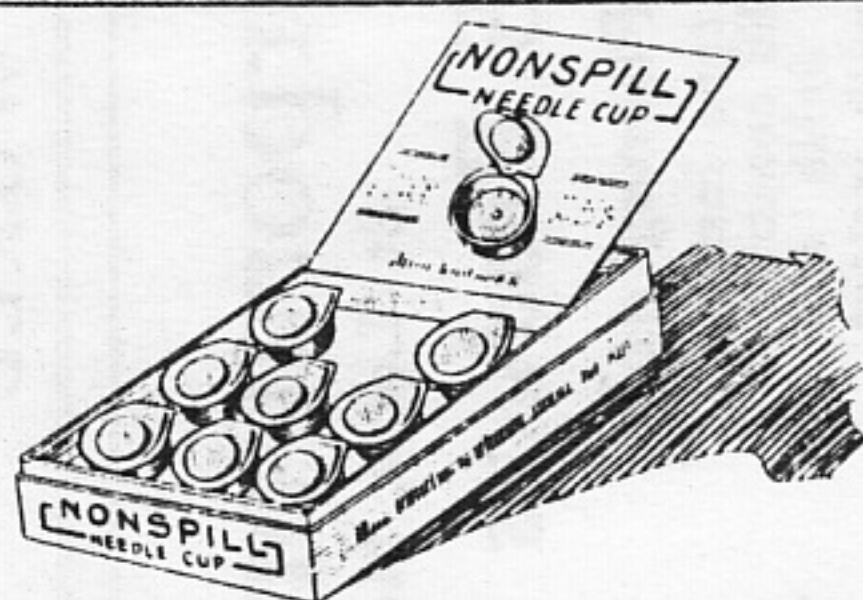
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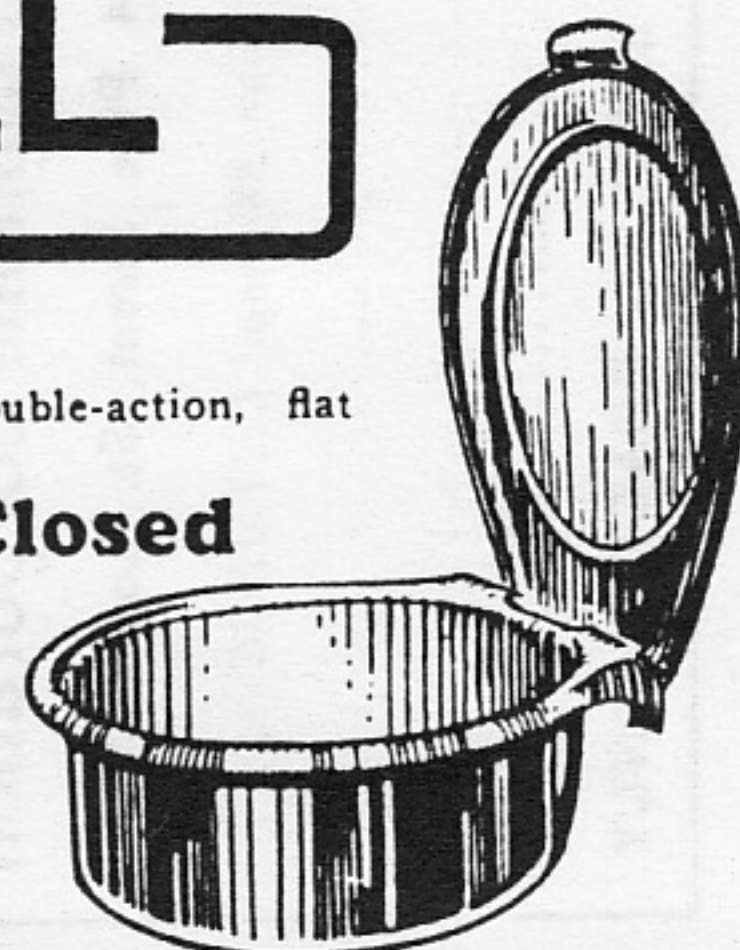
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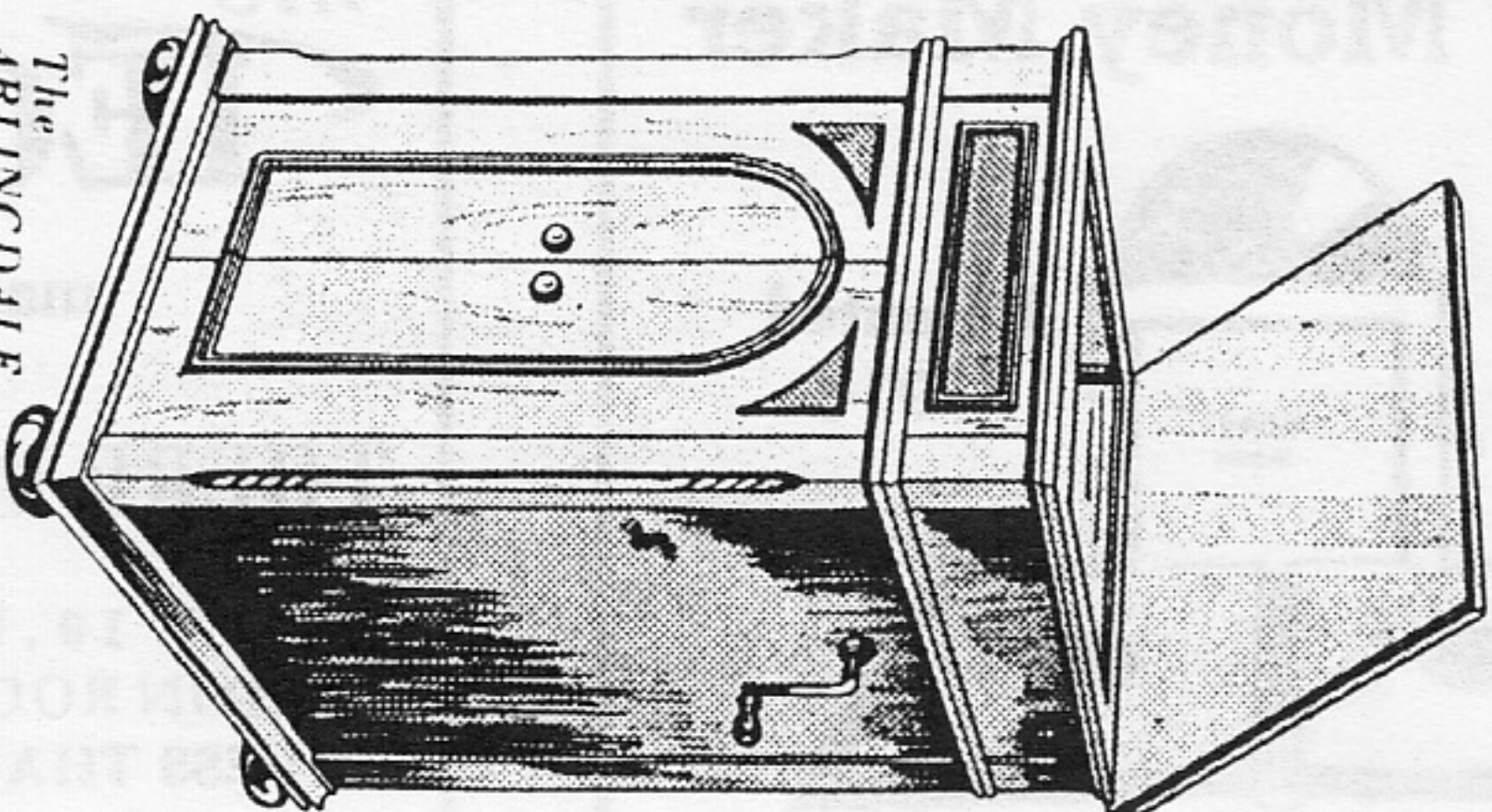
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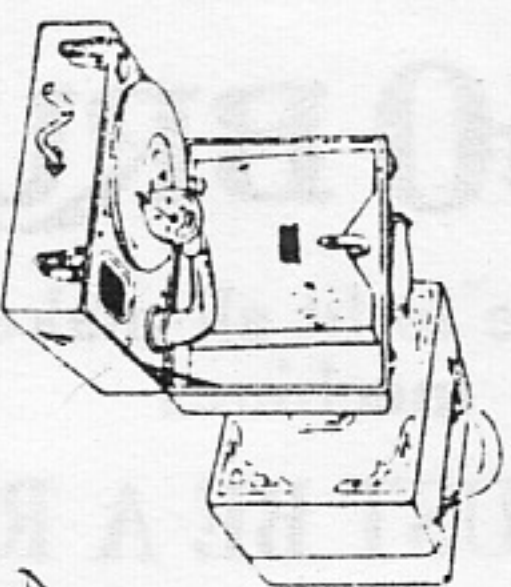
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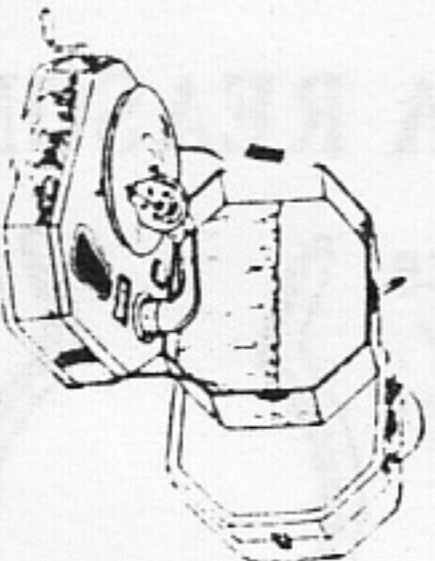
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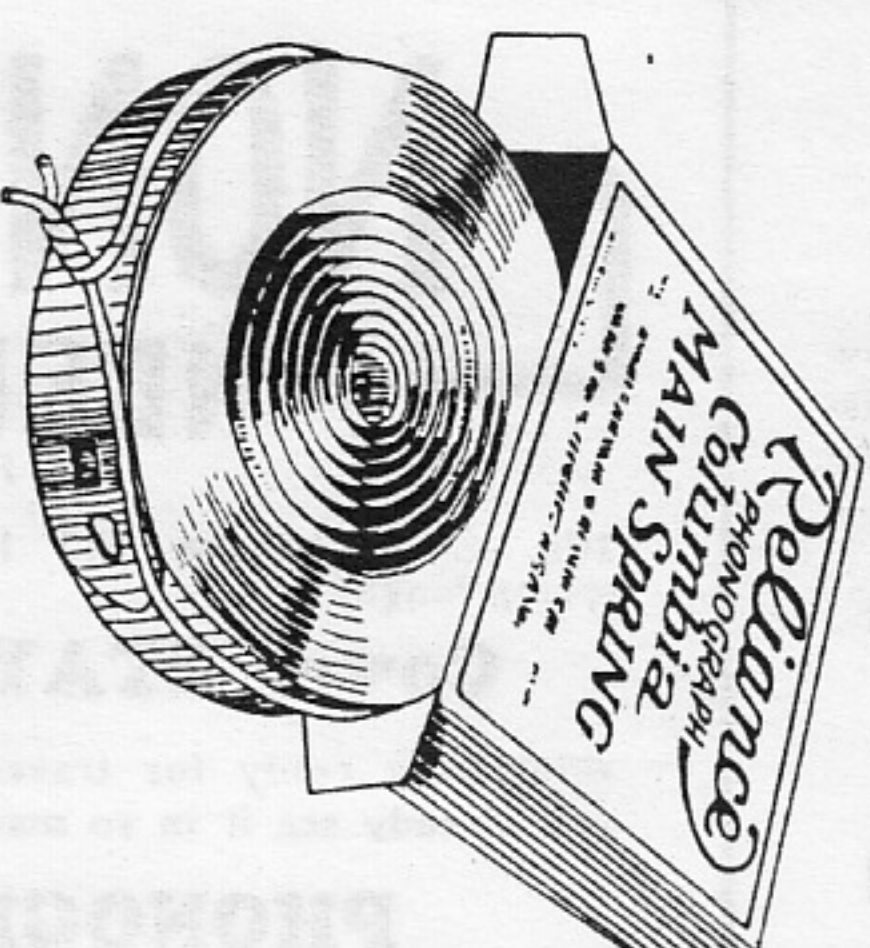
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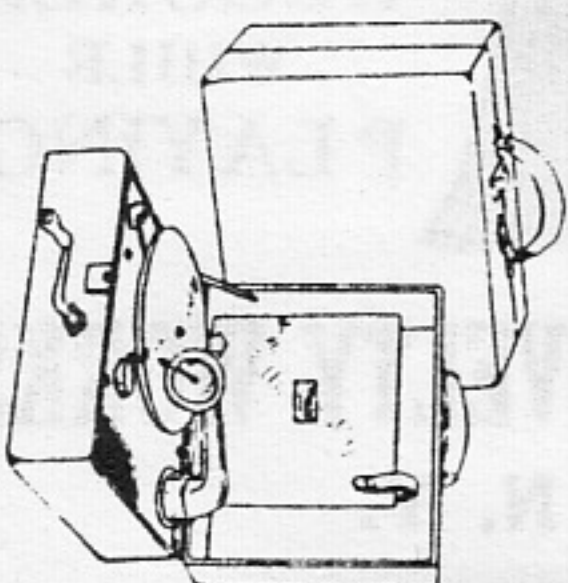
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